MADONNA, MAIDEN AND MARTYR : MODELS OF FEMININITY IN SOME EARLY WORKS OF ANDRÉ GIDE AND D. H. LAWRENCE

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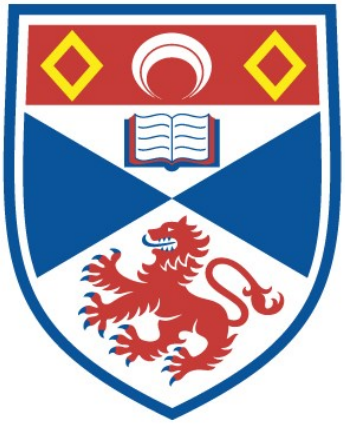

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MADONNA, MAIDEN, AND MARTYR: MODELS OF FEMININITY IN SOME EARLY WORKS OF ANDRÉ GIDE AND D. H. LAWRENCE

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THESIS

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Abstract

This dissertation studies certain similarities between some early *Bildungsroman* of D. H. Lawrence and André Gide. In Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* and *The Rainbow*, and Gide's *L'Immoraliste* and *La Porte étroite*, the authors explore the destructive effects of cultural "Icons", narrowly codified gender roles, upon sensitive young European women at the turn of the century. Through an intricate subtext of allusive imagery, postures, language, and "mythical" patterns, Lawrence and Gide imply that a patristic Christianity had somehow enlisted certain strains of Romance to fashion a pervasive cultural code that encouraged young women to be virginal, passive, and receptive to suffering.

The young female protagonists look to their roles as Madonna, Maiden, and Martyr as an escape from a provincial world that offers little to their "overbrimming" souls. Ironically, it is their Knight-Christs, the "mentors" who propose to teach them about the higher world, who imprison them further. Pretending to elevate them to the status of Spiritual Muse to inspire the male quest for selfhood, the lovers demand of their Madonna-Maidens a passivity whereby suffering is their only "heroic" act. Male-sculpted models of femininity, then, make it impossible for young women to pursue their own quests for the authentic "self".

The final tragedy for the young women comes when their opposite numbers awaken from Romance's pregenital spring to what Lawrence calls "blood-consciousness". The Maidens' Knight-Christs now find restrictive their spiritual lovers and desire instead the initiation into the "flesh" preached by a new cultural code, that of Nietzsche et al. Lawrence's and Gide's young female characters, then, serve as exemplars of an entire generation of young women destroyed in this teleological shift to a new cultural ethos, one in which, suddenly, their "virtues" are judged vices, all they had been presented to them as "natural" is deemed "unnatural".

Declarations

(i) I, Richard Terrence Driskill, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 100,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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Introductory: Male-Sculpted Models of Femininity

> *Tristran commanded [the monster] and his minions, who were skilled carpenters and goldsmiths. to make a hall in a cavern and to fashion lifelike statues of Queen Isolt and Brenvein. . . . Whenever Tristran visits the image of Ysolt he kisses it and clasps it in his arms, as if it were alive. By means of the image Tristran recalls the delights of their great loves, their troubles and their griefs, their pains and their torments. When he is in a gay mood he kisses it a great deal; but he vents his rage when he is angry.*
>
> --Thomas's *Tristran* [1]

A. Overview

In his discussion of the literary influences on D. H. Lawrence, Radha Krishna Sinha pauses to note certain similarities between the personal formations and literature of the British author and of André Gide:

> [Lawrence] seeks, like André Gide, deliberately to cut himself adrift from his puritan Methodist moorings, and seek liberation through a more sensual philosophy of life. The Laurentian dilemma has much in common with Gide's. They are both crushed in childhood by the constant and excessive devotion of a mother inflexibly rigid and narrow in her religious outlook, and in adolescence by the mystic, religious love of a girl who seeks mainly an intense communion of the soul. Gide's *La Porte étroite* corresponds to the phase of Paul Morel's spiritual relationship with Miriam, and *L'Immoraliste* represents, with slight difference, the phase of rebellion against the spiritual ideal as the Clara episode does in the novel. They both seek release in authors who are congenial to that phase of experience. Like Gide, Lawrence feels that the ascetic, idealistic writers have little to give him in his need.[2]

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[1]Gottfried Von Strassburg, *Tristan: with the 'Tristran' of Thomas*, trans. and ed. A. T. Hatto (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin [Classics], 1960, 1987), 315.

[2]Radha Krishna Sinha, *Literary Influences on D. H. Lawrence* (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1985), 87-8.

Sinha's observations, apparently the entire comparative critical history of the two contemporary European authors (who, interestingly, largely ignored one another's importance[3]), provide a starting point to outline this dissertation's scope.

This study will argue that Lawrence and Gide, in the works cited by Sinha, suggest that they and their literary alter egos were "crushed" by women conforming, ironically, to models of femininity self-servingly created by a male-dominated culture; that not only do both authors imply their male protagonists were, then, collectively guilty of creating their own spiritual confinement, but that these feminine models inevitably "crushed" the female protagonists far more than they did the male. Both authors understood that Christianity had somehow enlisted certain strains of Romance to form a pervasive cultural mythology that encouraged the sensitive young women of their epoch to be virginal, passive, and receptive to suffering. Through an intricate subtext of imagery, language and mythical patterns, Gide and Lawrence reveal the destructive presence of these cultural influences upon their female characters.

Both authors reveal through this subtext, too, a sensitivity to the vicious cycle when the female characters, just as do Gide and Lawrence, "seek release in authors". Surrounding themselves with the written word, the young women frequently confuse literature and life, vicarious and lived experience; looking to the authors of religion and romance for escape from an increasingly mean and sterile world, they end by exchanging one prison for another. The cycles close with a further irony when the young males, who had taken on the role of their beloveds' literary mentors, abandon them

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[3]Lawrence mentions Gide in only three letters, all written in the last years of his life: he finds *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* "interesting as a revelation of the modern state of mind--but it's done to shock and surprise . . . not real"; he dismisses *Corydon* as a "damp little production", *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, 7 vol, eds. James T. Boulton et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979-91), VI, 100, 282. Wondering who might write a preface for the French translation of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence playfully writes Jean Watson, "Where in France, they are going to find a man of 'highest literary standing and most unimpeachable moral authority', I ask you. Will it be M. Gide?" (*Letters*, VII, 382).

Gide does not mention Lawrence in his Journal until 1930, and then only to note that few books had displeased him as much as had *The Virgin and the Gypsy*, Seven years later, he chides François Mauriac--"que peut bien devenir une lady Chatterley viellie"--for his recent sense of sympathy with the Lawrence Mauriac refers to as a "derisory prophet" . *Journal 1889-1939* (Paris: Pleiade, 1948), 7 November 1930, 1015-16; 7 August 1937, 1268. For Mauriac, see his *Oeuvres autobiographiques*, ed. François Durand (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 419.

because they adopt the patterns delineated in those works, *because* they respond, then, to what they assume to be their lovers' suggestions.

The dissertation concentrates on four works (adding Lawrence's *The Rainbow* to the trio Sinha mentions) for three reasons. Firstly, because these are all *Bildungsroman* and, consequently, the works most concerned with the effect of initial man-woman relationships on the young characters' development, these novels attend to the cultural preconceptions that young men and women bring to their relationships. Secondly, these novels are, as Gide referred to his two *récits*, literary twins, experimenting with different variables to work through similar problems posed by the cultural dichotomy of body and spirit in man-woman relationships. Alissa's exploration of the ascetic extremity in *La Porte étroite* counterpoises Michel's complete sensual abandon in *L'Immoraliste*; Ursula, who incarnates the problems and desires of both Paul and Miriam, achieves a harmony of body and souls in *The Rainbow* by overcoming the cultural discourse on "virginity" that had made sex impossibly "complicated" for both central characters in *Sons and Lovers*.

Most importantly, this dissertation concentrates on these sets of literary twins because Gide and Lawrence, through their revelation of these feminine models, provide ideal exemplars of an entire generation of sensitive young women caught in the inevitably tragic intersection between two cultural fields of force. Nourished on male-penned literature that suggested they serve as spiritual inspiration for their male lovers, they have difficulty adapting when the same males, as Sinha suggests, seek release in a new generation of authors sensitive to the need for sensual release. Gide and Lawrence, as do their characters, belong to a continental literary society which transcends national boundaries and moeurs. The same fathers of the Church and like-minded authors of Romance influence the membership in strikingly similar ways. Goethe and Baudelaire signal everywhere the same cultural transitions; the age of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Freud undermines equally everywhere the same teleological underpinnings. A dissertation that began as an attempt to chart certain similarities between the literature of two authors, then, soon became an analysis of a cultural phenomenon that troubled similarly the lives of sensitive young women throughout Europe, whether they had grown in the English Midlands or in the north of France.

The dissertation relies on close textual analysis. Because these are four intensely autobiographical works, however, the study occasionally explores certain parallels between lives and fiction where they might shed light on textual suggestions. Indeed, with two authors who found in literature a way to work through personal dilemmas, it would be foolish to ignore biography entirely. It seems of interest to note, as well, certain biographical parallels--how Gide's and Lawrence's creative lives appear to have been shaped similarly by what Sinha calls "inflexibly rigid" and religiously narrow mothers, by similarly "delicate" constitutions. This dissertation does not aspire to be, however, biographical. The study, similarly, does not pretend to be psychological in nature, though, again, occasional theories by psychological critics and this author's own speculation on psychological inferences will be offered where they might further illumine the texts.

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The adolescent Stephen Dedalus first confuses the image of the Madonna with those of his own romantic interests when he uses Eileen--"When they were grown up he was going to marry Eileen".[4]--to penetrate an epithet in the metaphorical "litany of the Blessed Virgin":

> Eileen had long white hands. One evening when playing tig she had put her hands over his eyes: long and white and thin and cold and soft. That was ivory: a cold white thing. That was the meaning of *Tower of Ivory*. (*Portrait*, 35)

The confusion between the Blessed Virgin and Eileen, between the spiritual nature of the Madonna's touch and the sensual nature of Eileen's, increases when the young girl playfully--and seductively--"put her hand into his pocket where his hand was and he . . . felt how cool and thin and soft her hand was. . . . *Tower of Ivory. House of Gold*. By thinking of things you could understand them" (*Portrait*, 43). Stephen's "understanding" eventually expands to where it embraces somehow the Virgin Mary and the prostitute, that is, sensual renunciation and sensual indulgence. The fallen president of the sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary finds that

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[4]James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1976), 8. Hereafter cited as *Portrait*.

> his sin . . . had led him nearer to the refuge of sinners. Her eyes seemed to regard him with mild pity; her holiness, a strange light glowing faintly upon her frail flesh, did not humiliate the sinner who approached her . . . . If ever his soul, reentering her dwelling shyly after the frenzy of his body's lust had spent itself, was turned toward her whose emblem is the morning star, *bright and musical, telling of heaven and infusing peace*, it was when her names were murmured softly by lips whereon there still lingered foul and shameful words, the savour itself of a lewd kiss.
>
> That was strange. (*Portrait*, 105)

Strange, perhaps, but the juxtaposition of Virgin and prostitute, along with Joyce's phallic play--"reentering [the Blessed Virgin's] dwelling shyly"--provides at least a partial explanation of why Stephen's decade-long relationship with the young E. C. (Emma Clery), often puzzles the young Catholic woman. While Stephen, consciously or not, demands of her the impossible combination of voluptuousness and virginity promised by the cult of Mary and her full-breasted icons, he stands quick to condemn any young woman who, in her humanness, can choose but one of the icon's alternatives. And if Joyce implies here that Stephen's and E. C.'s expectations--ones formed by myth and literature, by tales of priests and nuns--force young women, or at least encourage them, to fashion their lives after idealised cultural models, the attendant danger seems clear enough. To paraphrase Mark Gerzon's warning in a study of the influence of American media heroes on American males, to model oneself after another woman is problematic; to model oneself after an artistic idealisation is dangerous.[5]

Neither D.H. Lawrence nor André Gide was Catholic, so neither was raised in the romantic cult of the Blessed Virgin. Still, like Joyce, both grew up in religiously charged atmospheres, both demanded that religion be passionate, both bridled when the Church restricted passion to spiritual acts, and both, this dissertation will argue, attempted in their literature to work out the effects of Christian models of femininity on the young women of their day. How does the young adept of Mary confront the paradox of the sensuous virgin embodied in the Madonna, at once the "paragon of

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[5]Mark Gerzon, *A Choice of Heroes: The Changing Faces of American Manhood* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982), 5: "To model oneself after another man is in itself problematic. But to model oneself after an image of a man, repackaged for the camera, is dangerous".

virginity" and the Christian earth mother who, in the incarnation of the Christ, made the spiritual "Word" flesh? As late as 1964, a prayer book inspired by the Second Vatican Council's directives recommended the following petition in the section "We promise to imitate her": "Most Blessed Virgin Mary . . . your life of faith and love and perfect unity with Christ was planned by God to show us clearly what our lives should be. . . . You are the outstanding model of motherhood and virginity".[6] A difficult challenge for the girl who chooses the convent, a humanly impossible model for one not called to a life of celibacy.

This dissertation will explore D. H. Lawrence's and André Gide's concern for young women who battered themselves against such impossible icons, ones at least partially sculpted by the expectations of their young Puritan lovers. Through the development of iconic motifs, both authors hope to discredit what Roland Barthes refers to as "Myths", the historically constructed semiological system in which the "significations" produced reveal more about a culture's intentions than about the "signifiers" used to call them forth.[7] The mythmakers effect this manipulation by emptying the signifier of any essential truth in order to fill it with what Barthes calls their "concept," the idea the mythmakers hope to create. The myth's "signification" of the Virgin Mary, for example, would be the product of the "signifier", the woman Mary emptied of her real self and then filled with the desired "concept", the idea that women should be virginal, passive, and receptive to suffering. The concern here, then, is not to quarrel with the historicity of the "signifiers"--the Virgin Mary, real maidens or female martyrs as they may have existed before their mythical appropriation--but to show how the "concept" of the Ideal Woman leads frequently to tragedy. In Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* [8] and Gide's "twin" *récits* , *L'Immoraliste* [9] and *La Porte*

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[6]From Fr. Dermot Hurley, ed., *Marian Devotions for Today: Based on the Second Vatican Council* (Dublin, 1971), 15; quoted by Marina Warner in *Alone of All Her Sex: the Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Pan books), 68.

[7]See Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, [Collection Points], 1957), 193-247. Barthes explains history's need to distort the form (signifier) on p. 204: "Voyons maintenant le signifié [signifier]: cette histoire qui s'écoule hors de la forme, c'est le concept qui va l'absorber toute. Le concept, lui, est déterminé: il est à la fois historique et intentionnel; il est le mobile qui fait proférer le mythe".

[8]D. H. Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers*, eds. Helen and Carl Baron (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Subsequent parenthetical page numbers refer to this edition.

[9]André Gide, *L'Immoraliste* (Paris: Mercure de France, Collection Folio, 1972). Subsequent parenthetical page numbers refer to this edition.

étroite,[10] works in which the "myths" are exposed, these concepts are at least partially responsible for the physical deaths of Gide's two young heroines and the emotional death of Lawrence's Miriam, who is left "feeling dead" (463).

The term "Icon", rather than the Barthesian term "signification" or the anthropological "archetype", will be used to refer to these created models of femininity, though they, like Mario Praz's "types", find their genesis only "when some particular figure [has] made a profound impression on the popular mind".[11] When Jérôme's first attempt to describe Alissa's sadly-sweet expression leads to an analogy with an icon--"une statuette florentine de l'époque de Dante"(22)--he metaphorically freezes Alissa far more than if he had allowed her the full range of expressions and emotions Dante gives to the Beatrice recalled in the allusion. Stephen is able to orchestrate his conversation with the icon at the right side of the altar because her sweet sadness has been forever fixed by the sculptor's hand. The Madonna icon is the perceiver's ideal prey, its responses the invention of the imaginative needs and demands of the young man at the kneelingdesk. History and literature--which, for Barthes, voluntarily accept and help diffuse history's "myths"[12]-- had already reduced the Madonna to a type; now the icon reduces further the possibilities of the type to a single posture.

Jérôme's Beatrician statuette and the icon of St. Catherine which Miriam has nailed on her wall (207) emphasise, too, the sacredness that often extends beyond the religious figure represented to the representation itself. The icon's implications for feminine behaviour, then, might easily be perceived by the religious mind as commandments, the failure to comply as sin. This inability to distinguish clearly between the objects of reverence and the artefacts used to represent them leaves the young adept particularly

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[10]André Gide, *La Porte étroite* (Paris, Mercure de France, Collection Folio, 1972). Subsequent parenthetical page numbers refer to this edition.

[11]Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, trans. Angus Davidson (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 191.

[12]*Mythologies*, 221. That literature is both myth and mythmaker lies at the thematic heart of *Mythologies*. "Le consentement volontaire au mythe peut d'ailleurs définir toute notre Littérature traditionnelle: normativement, cette Littérature est un système mythique caractérisé: il y a un sens, celui du, discours; il y a un signifiant, qui est ce même discours comme forme ou écriture; il y a un signifié, qui est le concept de Littérature; il y a une signification, qui est le discours littéraire".

vulnerable to those artists who would appropriate a Virgin Mary for cultural designs.[13]

Since Alissa and Miriam have accepted, to some degree, these icons as models for their behaviour before they meet Jérôme and Paul, it will be necessary to distinguish between this readiness and their male lovers' attempts to project the icons onto them. Care must be taken, as well, to identify when the characters are unaware that the narrator is depicting them in iconic terms; and, finally, it will be necessary to signal when the reader recognises an iconic posture which *both* character and narrator seem to ignore.

Whether Gide and Lawrence have Jérôme and Paul freeze their young women in narrow iconic postures or have Miriam and Alissa limit themselves, the perceived stasis might serve as an ironic contrast to the change and growth that lie at the heart of the *Bildungsroman*. Might it be that Paul and Jérôme find the denial of Miriam's and Alissa's growth a necessary price for their own development? The icon's stasis underlines, too, the passivity that serves as a foil to the young men's activity, the emotional stasis needed to allow the protean emotional life during Paul's and Jérôme's coming of age. In any case, the young woman who serves as muse in her male lover's quest for his "self" forfeits the chance to find *her* "self".

Finally, while the women portrayed in Alissa's and Miriam's voracious reading arguably influence their ideas on femininity more than do statuettes and religious paintings, the female characters that populate their literature--and most often the male as well--rarely venture beyond the reductive lines of Romance's types. Their postures and expressions lend themselves readily--as the Pre-Raphaelites knew--to a handful of icons, nurturing a tendency in both the males and females to envisage their opposite numbers. Lawrence and Gide frequently underscore the point with their male characters' need to "paint" the female object of interest. When Paul "suddenly" comes upon Miriam, he (or, rather, the narrative point of view for which he is serving as central intelligence) reconstructs the image spatially rather than linearly.

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[13]*Mythologies*, 217: "Quel est le propre du mythe? C'est de transformer un sens en forme. Autrement dit, le mythe est toujours un vol de langage". "On peut dire que le caractère fondamental du concept mythique c'est d'être *approprié*" (204). See also footnote 7.

Miriam magically appears in the frame provided by the narrator, poses until he is done with her, then compliantly disappears.

> Mother and son went into the small railed garden, where was a scent of red gillivers. By the open door were some floury loaves, put out to cool. A hen was just coming to peck them. Then, in the doorway suddenly appeared a girl in a dirty apron. She was about fourteen years old, had a rosy dark face, a bunch of short black curls, very fine and free, and dark eyes; shy, questioning, a little resentful of strangers, she disappeared. (154)

Paul's perception reduces a potentially vital Miriam to "Girl in the Doorway".

Passivity and virginity are just two of the common denominators the Madonna icon shares with the Maiden and the Martyr, two other models of femininity explored in these novels. Gide and Lawrence allusively chart the influences of the icons born of Romance, once the Christian ascetic code replaces the code of sensual courtly love in the early thirteenth century.[14] The confluence of the Christian and Romance tributaries and the composite effect upon the literary constructs of Miriam and Alissa seem to be particular concerns for these authors. As we shall see, Malory might well conflate Madonna and Maiden when he has his Christ-like Arthur carry to battle a banner with "a chalke-whitte mayden/ And a childe in hir arme";[15] and Scott blurs further the distinction between the two icons in his characterisation of the "Lucys and Rowenas" who inhabit the imaginative reality of Miriam's bedroom (173): "Something there was of a Madonna cast" in Lucy,[16] and Rowena "is not to be approached with other thoughts than such as we bring to the shrine of the Blessed Virgin".[17]

But in what specific ways do Maiden, Madonna, and Martyr become one in their endurance, virginity, and predisposition for suffering? Whether the iconic scenarios are drawn from chivalric cycles or folk tales (what Northrop

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[14]See Marina Warner's illuminating chapter, "Troubadours", in *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Pan Books, Picador Edition, 1985), 134-48.

[15]*Morte Arthure*, ed. John Finlayson (London: Edward Arnold, 1967), ll. 3648-9. Arguably, Mallory, who emphasises throughout the poem Arthur's faithfulness as a Christian warrior, metaphorically sets the New Eve of Mary against the Old Eve of Guinevere.

[16]Sir Walter Scott, *The Bride of Lammermoor: The Waverley Novels*, 48 vols. (Edinburgh: T & A Constable, 1901), XIV, 44.

[17]Sir Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe, The Waverley Novels*, XVI, 32.

Frye calls "naive romance"[18]), Elaines and Cinderellas wait as patiently as the Madonna for a regenerative prince. Jérôme makes pilgrimages to both Italy and the Holy land, finishes his military service and the research for his book while Alissa sequesters herself at Fongueusemare. The only activities allowed the Maiden are prayer and the occasional defence of her virginity. The Maiden's code has taught her to accept suffering as the emotional proof that she has become a "martyr" for love. As Frye explains, "with the rise of the romantic ethos, heroism comes to be thought of in terms of suffering, endurance, and patience".[19] Still, the maiden is left dangerously vulnerable, since the knight must return before she loses her idealised beauty, a condition necessary for her inclusion in the pages of Romance. This, along with the maiden's preternatural fidelity and penchant for suffering, allows--often seems to encourage--a certain insensitivity in the knight, who is always free to find another maiden in another castle.

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Part I of this dissertation studies the Madonna icon in three of her signature functions, hoping both to isolate them and to identify their nexus with the characteristics of the Virgin Martyr and Romance Maiden. Three significant questions arise here. First, how much does the Madonna's opposite number, the complementary role implied by the Madonna icon, reinforce Paul's and Jérôme's needs? Long before Paul suspects Miriam "want[s] a Christ in him" (463), her devotion has allowed him a prideful escape from the dreariness of Bestwood's coal pits and Nottingham's "Surgical Appliances". When Alissa fails to separate Jérôme's image from that of her God--"Mais pourquoi entre Vous et moi, posez-Vous partout son image?" (169)--she grants him an instant immortality, one much more easily attained than the academic apotheosis he hopes to achieve through his projected history or religious philosophy,[20] or the artistic immortality Paul hopes to gain through his painting.

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[18]Northrop Frye, *Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 3.

[19]*Secular Scripture*, 88.

[20]Gide's irony cuts at least two ways here. Beyond the pretentiousness of Jérôme's plan to begin his academic career with an epic tome lies the smug assumption that his quest is superior to Abel's, whose novel *Privautés* recalls Gide's own *L'Immoraliste*. "Abel, que le professorat attirait peu et qui se croyait né pour écrire, gagnait rapidement, au moyen

Second, as the archetype of Christian maternity, to what extent does the Madonna, with her indefatigable mercy and comfort, speak to Paul's and Jérôme's excessive attachment to their own mothers? And how do Miriam and Alissa cope with demands to be at once mothers and lovers to their would-be Christs? Finally, for two writers with a strong sense of need for sexual liberation, how does the pressure on Miriam and Alissa to recreate the Madonna's miraculous fusion of fecundity and inviolability allow Gide and Lawrence to explore their rebellion against the prudery of their own early religious training? The chronology of what Gide called his "jumeaux", his twin *récits*,[21] ostensibly reverses their cause-and-effect relationship. In *L'Immoraliste*, nine years the junior sibling, Michel's "abandon", his celebration of the physical over the spiritual and the 'pagan' South over the puritan North, suggests the antipodal cure for Alissa's virginal renunciation. Ursula, in The *Rainbow*, a novel Lawrence began almost immediately after completing *Sons and Lovers*, serves a similar function in Lawrence's philosophy of body and spirit, though Clara provides a partial antidote for what Paul insists is Miriam's refusal to let the "body" enter into their relationship.

Part II attempts to chart the influence of romantic literature on the expectations both Lawrence's and Gide's couples bring to their relationships. Our own age has begun to worry that young people mistake for reality the images they see on their ubiquitous screens; Mrs Morel convinces herself Paul and Miriam's affair "was like a fire fed on books" (360). Lawrence's narrator goes further, claiming that an amalgam of Miriam's Scripture and Scott--"Christ and God . . . and Ediths, and Lucys and Rowenas, Brian de Bois Guilberts, Rob Roys and Guy Mannerings"--had become "life for her" (173). And since the literary diets of both Miriam and Alissa produce a

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de quelques pièces à succès, la fortune qui lui manquait; pour moi, plus attiré par l'étude que par le profit qui peut en revenir, je pensais m'adonner à celle de la philosophie religieuse, dont je projetais d'écrire l'histoire" (68-9).

[21] *Journal*, 7 February 1912, 365. During his interviews with Jean Amouche, Gide emphasises the sibling interdependence three times: "Je n'aurais pas pu écrire ce livre [*L'Immoraliste*], si je ne projetais déjà, en contrepartie, le livre qui est devenu ensuite *La Porte étroite*"; "Ces deux livres se sont développés concurremment dans mon esprit et, ce qui m'a permis d'écrire l'un, c'est la certitude où je me maintenais d'écrire l'autre. Malgré un décalage de plusieurs années, il [*La Porte étroite*] était non seulement en formation, mais déjà tout formé en moi"; "Je crois que je n'aurais pu écrire, comme je l'ai fait, *L'Immoraliste*, si je n'avais pas senti, pensé d'avance, que j'allais écrire un autre livre en contrepoids, en pendant". Cited by Eric Marty, *André Gide, Qui êtes vous ?* (Lyon: La Manufacture, 1987), 208, 209, 211.

confusion between a redemptive Christ and a redemptive knight, several of the foci here will take us back to those in Part I.

First, Romance and Christianity both provide their adepts with a vision of a higher existence. Sir Walter Scott, for example, offers as much escape as do the biblical authors from what Miriam perceives to be her "brutish" surroundings. Lawrence infuses his Miriam with the same "ancient consciousness of women" that Virginia Woolf identifies in Maggie Tulliver, a religiousness that "seems in them to have brimmed and overflowed and uttered a demand for something . . . perhaps incompatible with the facts of human existence".[22] Maggie "sometimes thought . . . if she could have had all of Scott's novels and all of Byron's poems . . . perhaps she might have found happiness enough to dull her sensibility to actual daily life".[23] By the time Paul meets the fourteen-year-old Miriam, she has already woven at least four of the Waverley Novels into the patterns of her dream world.

Second, the similarity of sexual attitudes provides an even stronger--and for Alissa and Miriam, a more onerous--tie between the suggestions of Christian and Romantic icons. The metaphorical equation of womb with tabernacle, virginity with Grail, along with the chivalric code's emphasis on honour, not only bridges the two influences, but makes virginity as high a priority for the Maiden as it is for the Madonna. Romance provides a positive incentive where the Church relies on the fear of divine punishment. In *Chivalric Literature*, John Leyerle concludes that, in a culture where honour depends on public recognition, "honour for women is a function of sexual chastity; shame comes from any public evidence of unchastity or sexual aggression".[24]

The emotional difficulties concomitant with heroic virginity provide a third intersection between the Madonna and the Maiden: the suffering born of renunciation. Both models make impossible demands on their adepts. The Christian need to incarnate its divinity makes necessary the paradox of virginity and fertility in the Virgin Birth; Christianised Romance, in its demand that the Maiden serve as spiritual muse for the questing knight,

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[22]Virginia Woolf, "George Eliot", *Collected Essays* (London: Hogarth Press, 1967), I, 204.

[23]George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss* (New York: Airmont, 1964), 230. Subsequent parenthetical page numbers refer to this edition.

[24]John Leyerle, ed., *Chivalric Literature: Essays on Relations Between Literature and Life in the Later Middle Ages* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Western Mich. University Press, 1980), 140.

suggests that the defence of her virginity is the female's sole "heroic" act. Ultimately, Christian and Romance icons differ only in their attitudes toward the honourable options they offer young women: virginity, marriage, convent. Christian biography elevates the nun's marriage to Christ beyond the level of mortal matrimony; Romance prefers the happily-ever-after-union with a mortal redeemer.

Finally, Passivity permeates both Christian and Romantic strains, whether it lies in the Madonna abandoned while her son is about a father's business or in the Maiden left behind by the crusading knight. I am particularly interested in the translation of this pattern when Lawrence's and Gide's knights exchange soldierdom for more cerebral pursuits. If Paul's quest is artistic and Jérôme's scholarly--he purposes to write the history of religious philosophy (69)--must Miriam and Alissa settle for the role of Muse?

Part III returns to the convent to find both Madonna and Maiden bent on martyrdom. Remembering that Miriam and Alissa remain literary constructs even though they depend heavily on biographical models, it makes little difference that Alissa's martyrdom is real, while Miriam ends "feeling dead" (463). Metaphorical, too, is Miriam's convent, a redoubled asceticism brought on, at least partially, by Paul's dismissal of her as a "mystic nun" (292). Miriam's religious and romantic models have all prepared her for this end, though they have coloured it differently. Contemplation of St. Catherine has prepared Miriam for "the big things and the deep things, like tragedy" (255); however, as Northrop Frye points out, in Scott's novels "a successful female career consists of a good marriage, and retirement to a convent is a sign of maladjustment".[25] Ivanhoe returns to marry Rowena, who would have taken "refuge in a convent" only to avoid sharing a throne with Athelstane.[26] Obaldistone similarly saves the heroine of *Rob Roy* (another of the Scott novels whose characters inhabit Miriam's bedroom), who considers the convent to be a trap of her "oppressed and antiquated religion".[27] Alissa's final rejection of earthly beauty, her mimesis of Christ's passion and celebration of poverty invoke life in the most rigourous cloisters. Both Lawrence and Gide seem to agree with Scott that

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[25] Frye, *Secular Scripture*, 88.
[26] *Ivanhoe*, Waverley XVI, 270.
[27] *Rob Roy*, Waverley VIII, 141.

the convent indicates failure; more difficult to determine is where they would have us lay the blame.

The "Romantic Agony" delineated by Mario Praz provides the common denominator in all three iconic postures, those of the Madonna, Maiden, and Martyr. Even the source of suffering--the ubiquitous and multi-faceted renunciation--changes little, though the Virgin Martyr's metaphorical marriage to Christ and her frequent confusion of divine and mortal lovers heighten further her agony. Praz reminds his readers, too, that the etymology of the "ecstatic' [is] an exile from his own and present and actual self".[28] The need to escape what they perceive to be an oppressive reality might help explain the inevitability of Miriam's and Alissa's asceticism; unfortunately, the Martyr's escape eventually troubles that of the Maiden. An intimate relationship with their God initially sustains them: Miriam "loved tremblingly and passionately" a "Christ and God [who] made one great figure" (173); Alissa maintains she needs no guide other than Christ, no goal other than God: "C'est tout seul que chacun de nous doit gagner Dieu. . . . Pourquoi veux-tu [Jérôme] chercher un autre guide que le Christ? (36)". The arrival of human saviours suggests an alternate way to transcend the mundane, but eventually forces the two characters to choose between the human and the divine. Alissa sees herself caught between a "jealous God" (175) and a peripatetic Jérôme; Miriam seems willing to abandon Christ to make Paul her "religion" (323). Failing to attain ecstasy in either earthly or heavenly romance, Alissa and Miriam resort to the mystic's denial of the world, to what Praz calls the mystic's "stimulants", "such as fasts and vigils", "to bring about the necessary conditions for the intense realisations of their dreams".[29] If Lawrence and Gide suggest that their need for ecstasy is a necessary attribute of their character--and not a chimera induced by their reading--does either Miriam or Alissa have any other ecstatic alternative? To what extent do the texts suggest that their lovers have failed them, or that the sexual attitudes inculcated through the cultural icons blocked all other paths to ecstasy, or that Miriam and Alissa have thwarted themselves?

When the "dead level of provincial existence" fails to satisfy Maggie Tulliver, the protagonist of George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* looks to Thomas à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ* :

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[28]Praz, 202.
[29]Ibid., 201.

> Here, then, was a secret of life that would enable her to renounce all other secrets--here was a sublime height to be reached without the help of outward things--here was insight, and strength and conquest, to be won by means entirely within her own soul. (*Mill*, 233)

Maggie Tulliver was the young Lawrence's favourite heroine,[30] and a parallel with Miriam's asceticism can be readily seen. Arguably, Alissa abandons the rest of her library for Thomas à Kempis's influential ascetic primer because she, too, has tired of depending on others for sublime triumph (168).

Finally, does the Virgin Martyr's denial of "the help of outward things" ultimately exclude even the Christ she had hoped to imitate? The confusion of earthly and heavenly lovers seems to worsen as Miriam and Alissa heighten their ascetic rigour. In her desperate final days, Alissa asks her jealous god, "pourquoi entre Vous et moi, posez-Vous partout son [Jérôme's] image?" (169). Both authors seem to wonder if the ascetic identification with Christ goes beyond mimesis to the misrecognition of herself in Christ. When might the martyr's humility turn to pride in search of a personal triumph over brutish worlds, lovers mortal and divine? For Miriam, who "almost fiercely wished she were a man" because women are "kept at home and not allowed to be anything" (185), divine identification might be an attempt to play the male heroic role refused by Paul.

Part IV returns to Mario Praz's seminal work on Fatal Women,[31] but here to wonder if Lawrence and Gide provide an ironic reversal to the type of "La Belle Dame Sans Merci". Given that the renunciation demanded by both Miriam and Alissa encourages a rejection of life, might the Fatal

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[30] In *D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Record by "E.T."* (London: Frank Cass, 1965), Jessie Chambers remembers "Lawrence adored *The Mill on The Floss*, but always declared that George Eliot had 'gone and spoilt it halfway through.' He could not forgive the marriage of the vital Maggie Tulliver to the cripple Philip. . . . Maggie Tulliver was his favourite heroine. He used to say that the smooth branches of the beech trees (which he especially admired) reminded him of Maggie Tulliver's arms" (97-8). The young Lawrence's passionate concern for Maggie suggests that literature often became "life" to him, just as it did to Miriam (167).

[31] Praz, ch. IV, "La Belle Dame Sans Merci".

Woman, with her "pride of Life",[32] paradoxically invite her lover to a higher world?

The failure of Lucile, Alissa's mother, to rise above the type of the exotic woman--a type within Praz's "type"--tells us more about the provincial perceptions of Gide's fictive world than it does about his ability to fashion more complex female characters. Even Jérôme knows Le Havre society sufficiently to imagine the kind of reception extended to a "seduisante" Créole from Martinique. Praz cites the Cécily from Eugene Sue's *Mystères de Paris* as merely one example of the "fatal allumeuse" type widespread in nineteenth-century Romance:

> cette grande créole à la fois svelte et charnue, vigoureuse et souple comme une panthère, était le type incarné de la sensualité brutale qui ne s'allume qu'aux feux de tropiques.[33]

Jérôme recalls seeing his aunt only during summer vacations, when the vernal heat occasioned the low-necked bodices offset by sensual tropical colours--"l'ardente couleur des écharpes que ma tante jetait sur ses épaules nues" (16).

Gide's parody adds Cleopatra, another favourite of Romance, to the Fatal Women admixture. Lucile recalls the Serpent of the Nile in both her "ennui"[34] and seductive posture. Lucile "s'allongeait...sur un sofa ou dans un hamac, demeurait étendue jusqu'au soir et ne se relevait que languissante" (17-18). And Jérôme complements well the Nile Queen in Lucile with the ambivalence typical of the Fatal Woman's young victims. Compare "the sentiment of mixed adoration and terror" that Gautier gave "to the lovers of Cleopatra",[35] with the ambivalence experienced by the passive Jérôme. "J'éprouvais un singulier malaise auprès de ma tante, un sentiment fait de trouble, d'une sorte d'admiration et d'effroi" (18).

Fear wins the day in Jérôme's heart, warning that the Fatal Woman who has already devoured his uncle now means to consume him. Sadly, Alissa

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[32]In Praz, 241, the author Quotes Swinburne's description of Cleopatra in *Notes on the Designs of the Old Masters in Florence.*

[33]Eugène Sue, *Les Mystères de Paris,* (Paris: Editions Albin Michel/Hallier, 1981), III, 271.

[34]Praz, 205.

[35]Ibid., 219. Praz refers here to "Une Nuit de Cléopâtre", *Le Roman de la momie,* ed. Adolphe Boschot (Paris: Garnier, 1963).

too believes in the icon, fears that she has inherited her mother's fatal powers. But Gide's parody seems to break step with the mythical scenario by implying that Lucile's radiant energy of heat and light, if exercised by the right woman upon the right lover, might attract and enlighten rather than, true to the type Praz describes, "attract and burn".[36]

Lawrence's Belle Dame in *Sons and Lovers* strikes the Nordic rather than the Oriental note; still, Clara brings the exotic as surely to Nottinghamshire as Lucile does to Le Havre. And in Lawrence's ironic reversal of the Fatal Woman scenario lies perhaps the most significant rapprochement between the two authors, both determined, if necessary, to shock their age into further sexual liberation. Gide's pun implies Lucile brings lucidity where Alissa invites mystical shadow; Lawrence's suggests Clara clarifies that which Miriam's models have taught her to obscure. Miriam remains confident that Paul's "desire for higher things" will drive him away from Clara's destructive force and back to her. Paul, however, associates Clara's flame with a "baptism of fire in passion" (399), a Pentecostal fervour that brings an ecstatic oneness with life itself.

> It was as if he and the stars and the dark herbage and Clara were licked up in an immense tongue of flame which tore onwards and upwards. Everything rushed along in living beside him, everything was still, perfect in itself, along with him. This wonderful stillness in each thing in itself, while it was being borne along in a very ecstasy of living, seemed the highest point of bliss. (408)

Lawrence suggests that Miriam's ascetic denial of the world would be, ironically, more "fatal" than Clara's "pride in life".

The Fatal Women do not win the day, however. Lawrence and Gide use them as a sort of iconic ballast to suggest that Alissa and Miriam would do better to accept than oppose their own exoticness. Alissa confesses in her journal that her "mythological" feeling for nature in the exotic South and the telling mixture of fear and awe it provoked in her were religious too (160). But when her father sees Lucile in his daughter's unconsciously assumed *femme-fatale* pose, Alissa fears the Créole within her own character. "J'étais assise sur le canapé ou plutôt--ce que ne m'arrive presque jamais--je m'étais

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[36]Ibid., 199.

étendue, je ne sais pourquoi" (164). She prays that evening for God to show her the horror of all that has the appearance of evil.

Even Miriam's name, recalling the elder sister of Moses who led the sensuous dances after the crossing of the Red Sea (Exod. 15:20), promises the Oriental exotic. Paul first notices the woman in the "dark eyed" girl when, as the narrative focus, he frames her portrait as he did the first time he saw Miriam, who in "the doorway suddenly appeared" (155). Now, two years later, the Paul-focused narrator freezes her again as she "appeared in the doorway. She was nearly sixteen, very beautiful, with her warm colouring, her gravity, her eyes dilating, suddenly like an ecstasy" (175). "At twenty, she was full-breasted and luxuriously formed. Her face was still like a soft rich mask, unchangeable. But her eyes, once lifted, were wonderful" (256). Paul, then, must see the sensual exotic in Miriam, though he insists that Miriam bear all the responsibility when "purity" leads to an impasse in their relationship. Faith Pullin argues, "Of course it is Paul's own sexual inhibition that causes the terrible tensions between them",[37] a view that might suggest Paul as the type of the Fatal Woman's lover.

> The lover is usually a youth, and maintains a passive attitude; he is obscure, and inferior either in condition or in physical exuberance to the woman.[38]

The purpose here is not to side with either Paul or Miriam, any more than with either Jérôme or Alissa, but to suggest that Miriam's and Alissa's tragedies were influenced not just by a perceived--sometimes implicit--need to model themselves after certain Christian and Romantic icons, but also by an equally powerful need to resist the influence of others. By exploring the patterns of behaviour suggested through these icons, one of the techniques through which Gide and Lawrence place themselves between the reader and the narrator to imply views beyond the judgments of Paul or Miriam, Jérôme or Alissa, this thesis hopes to demonstrate that Gide and Lawrence suggest the only valid means to ecstasy involves acceptance of the full range of human potential, a spectrum running from the icon at one extremity to the icon at the other. Where myth separates, Lawrence and Gide would join, insisting that passionate people--the only kind they could accept as heroic--

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[37]Faith Pullin, "Lawrence's Treatment of Women in *Sons and Lovers*". In *Lawrence and Women*, ed. Anne Smith, (London: Vision Press, 1978), 60.

[38]Praz, 205.

need to enact both the Madonna and the Eve, Maiden and Fatal Woman, the White and Black Knight; that they need to deny the icons' insistence that spiritual and physical passion oppose one another. In *Women in Love*,[39] Birkin likens the ideal relationship between a man and a woman as one in which they would come together like "two single equal stars balanced in conjunction" (168). Gide and Lawrence seem to suggest that Miriam and Alissa first need to allow in themselves a conjunction whereby the Madonna and Fatal Woman would coexist, "balancing each other like two poles of one force" (224).

Birkin attains that ideal relationship only because his lover Ursula, the central character in *The Rainbow*, the novel that follows *Sons and Lovers*, has already attuned herself to the ideal harmony of body and spirit that eludes Clara and Miriam, Lucile and Alissa. Looking "like a Creole" (*Rainbow*, 286), with her dark hair and golden skin, Ursula arches, as the novel's title suggests, from the sensual earth to the spiritual heavens, then back again to the soil. To attain this fulfilment, Ursula must systematically smash the icons of Madonna, Maiden and Martyr in which others would cast her, and finally assume the role of the Fatal Women when her feckless knight, Anton, would impede her quest for self. By renouncing the role as muse so that she can seek for herself "the goal that she knew she did draw nearer to" (387), Ursula operates in the world of men that Miriam could only covet. Defining herself in both body and spirit, Ursula stand ready at the novel's end to enter, as the first woman of the Brangwen line had desired, "the battle . . . being waged on the edge of the unknown. She also wanted to know, and to be of the fighting host" (11).

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[39]D.H. Lawrence, *Women in Love* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1988). All subsequent parenthetical page numbers refer to this edition.

B. Methodology

Before moving on to explore the feminine icons in detail, I would like to use the idea of the Fatal Woman, more specifically the "Créole", to establish the methodological guide-lines for my argument. To understand how Gide, by telling us "Lucile Bucolin était créole", could both signal that an iconic subplot was in place and suggest a code of behaviour that would dictate Jérôme's and Alissa's response to "Créolism", suggests the kind of author-reader relationship Barthes outlines in his analysis of Balzac's short story "Sarrasine"[40] and Poe's tale, "Valdemar".[41] In his methodological conclusion for the Poe analysis, Barthes explains:

> The word 'code' itself should not be taken here in the rigourous, scientific sense of the term. The codes are simply associative fields, a supra-textual organization of notations which impose a certain idea of structure; the instance of the code is, for us, essentially cultural: the codes are certain types of 'déjà-lu' [already read], of déjà-fait [already done]: the code is the form of this déjà, constitutive of all the writing in the world.
>
> Although all the codes are in fact cultural, there is yet one, among those we have met with, which we shall privilege by calling it the *cultural code*: it is the code of knowledge, or rather of human knowledges, of public opinions, of culture as it is transmitted by the book, by education, and in a more general and diffuse form, by the whole of sociality.[42]

More simply put, Gide's and Lawrence's narrative method extends David Lodge's definition of language to suggest one for "cultural code": "I take language to be a shared system of sounds and written symbols for sounds, by which meaning is conveyed between people who share the system".[43] This study will analyse how Gide and Lawrence convey meaning through a "cultural code" they share with their readers.

Six kinds of evidence that the iconic cultural codes are in place will be applied to the texts: references to the operative contemporary mythologies

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[40]Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil,[Collection Points], 1976).

[41]Roland Barthes, "Textual Analysis of Poe's 'Valdemar'", trans. Geoff Bennington, reprinted in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. David Lodge (New York: Longman, 1988), 172-95.

[42]Ibid., 191.

[43]David Lodge, "An Approach Through Language", *Towards a Poetics of Fiction* , ed. Mark Spilka (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1977), 15.

for both the fictive culture and that of the author-reader; references to both worlds' cultural or religious symbols; direct or indirect references to the literature and other cultural artefacts that help inform the characters' beliefs and modes of behaviour; the "theatrical" posing and role-playing encouraged by these myths and artefacts; the myths' structural patterns; the language and linguistical "registers" that signal the characters' attempts--conscious or not--to move beyond the mundane to the "heroic". The codes will not be applied systematically, but called upon when dictated by, firstly, the icon under discussion and, secondly, the relative importance of the kinds of evidence in the analysis of the character studied. Even a quick look at the six kinds of evidence suggests an interrelatedness that would defy the rigourously systematic.

1. *Contemporary cultural mythologies*. These are not the myths in which a culture articulates an insight into Jung's "collective unconscious", tales through which "the voice of all mankind resounds in us";[44] these rather are the "myths" a culture creates to serve its own ends, 'individually-conscious' beliefs fashioned by and disseminated through oral and written discourse, photographs, movies, journalism, sports, spectacles, advertisements, in short, any instrument at a culture's disposal to serve its mythical language. Barthes holds it is the very nature of these "myths" to suggest the nature of things, when in fact they are chosen by the culture to ensure its future.[45] The members of a culture might accept the myths' *a priori* authority for several reasons: because of the efficacy of the mythmaking apparatus, or because the members have aligned their own needs with those of the people in power; because these myths free them from the difficulty of thinking about and acting on complex moral matters, or because the myths provide the comfort of assumed knowledge where real knowledge is impossible. The myth of the "Créole", merely a sub-myth of the vast "exotic" myth, is an example that speaks to all four of these reasons, particularly the last.

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[44]Carl G. Jung, *The Collected Works*, ed. Herbert Read et al., vol. XV(London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), 82.

[45]*Mythologies* , 194:"Lointaine ou non, la mythologie ne peut avoir qu'un fondement historique, car le mythe est une parole choisie par l'histoire: il ne saurait surgir de la 'nature' des choses. Cette parole est un message. Elle peut donc être bien autre chose qu'orale; elle peut être formée d'écritures ou de représentations; le discours écrit, mais aussi la photographie, le cinéma, le reportage, le sport, les spectacles, la publicité, tout cela peut servir de support à la parole mythique".

Barthes calls upon both Marx and Gorki to posit that the petit-bourgeois is incapable of imagining the "Other".[46] In trying to assimilate the Russian or the Black--or the Créole--"exotisme" comes to the rescue. "L'Autre devient pur objet, spectacle, guignol; relégué au confins de l'humanité, il n'attente plus à la sécurité du chez-soi".[47] Edward Saïd, a Palestinian educated first in an Orient under British jurisdiction and then in the United States, brings the double-eyed perspective of both the exoticised and the exoticiser. He holds that the Western discourse about the "Orient" is born of the need to validate and reinforce imperialism, and that the historical fact blinds more than just the petit-bourgeois:

> I doubt that it is controversial . . . to say that an Englishman in India or Egypt in the later nineteenth century took an interest in these countries that was never far from their status in his mind as British colonies. To say this may seem quite different from saying that an academic knowledge about India and Egypt is somehow tinged and impressed with, violated by , the gross political fact--and yet *that is what I am saying* in this study of Orientalism. For it is true that no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances; then it must also be true that for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstance of *his* actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second. And to be a European or an American in such a situation is by no means an inert fact.[48]

Extended to include later-nineteenth-century French views of the imperialised West Indies, Saïd's position would imply more than one level of irony in Lucile's Créolism. The gross political fact, abetted by the artists' myths, ensured a predictable reception from the society of Le Havre. In Lucile they would see not only the burning tropical sensuality of Sue's 'Créole', but also her kinship with other of Romance's popular Fatal Women, perhaps Mérimée's Carmen or Flaubert's Salammbô, "instruments of Satan", in whom the morally unhealthy hotter climes manifest themselves in a

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[46]Ibid., 239:"Le petit-bourgeois est un homme impuissant à imaginer l'Autre". Footnote 28 cites Marx: "'. . . ce qui en fait des représentants de la petit-bourgeois, c'est que leur esprit, leur conscience ne dépassent pas les limites que cette classe se trace à ces activités' (*18 Brumaire.*) Et Gorki: le petit-bourgeois, c'est l'homme qui s'est préféré".

[47]Ibid., 240

[48]Edward Saïd, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 11.

smouldering eroticism. Baudelaire, whose verses Jérôme recites and who represents for Alissa an example of the "pure" poet (103), fuelled the Créole myth biographically and literarily with his *Fleurs du mal*.[49] The Mulatto Jeanne Duval plays the 'bel animal' against the mystical Madame Sabatier in both Baudelaire's life and poetry; and it is her image, combined with Baudelaire's experiences in Mauritius (1841), that fuels the Créole-West Indies strain throughout *Fleurs du mal*. Lucile's attractive languor and the odour emanating from her handkerchiefs--"l'odeur qui semblait moins un parfum de fleur que de fruit" (18)--are mythically consistent with the world described in *Fleurs du mal* XXII, "Parfum exotique":

> Quand, les deux yeux fermés, en un soir chaud d'automne,
> Je respire l'odeur de ton sein chaleureux,
> Je vois se dérouler des rivages heureux
> Qu'éblouissent les feux d'un soleil monotone;
>
> Une île paresseuse où la nature donne
> Des arbres singuliers et des fruits savoureux;
> Des hommes dont le corps est mince et vigoureux,
> Et des femmes dont l'oeil par sa franchise étonne.

Perfume and "paresse" figure, too, in poem LXI, "A une dame créole":

> Au pays parfumé que le soleil caresse,
> J'ai connu, sous un dais d'arbres tout empourprés
> Et de palmiers d'où pleut sur les yeux la paresse,
> Une dame créole aux charmes ignorés.
>
> Son teint est pâle et chaud; la brune enchanteresse
> dans le cou des airs noblement maniérés;
> Grande et svelte en marchant comme une chasseresse,
> Son sourire est tranquille et ses yeux assurés.

The "parfum" remains, but the enchantress becomes Siren rather than huntress in LXII, "Moesta et Errabunda":

> Comme vous êtes loin, paradis parfumé,
> Où sous un clair azur tout n'est qu'amour et joie,
> Où tout ce que l'on aime est digne d'être aimé,
> Où dans la volupté pure le coeur se noie!
> Comme vous êtes loins, paradis parfumé!

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[49]Charles Baudelaire, *"Fleurs du mal" et autres poèmes*, ed. Henri Lemaître (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1964).

While the specific artistic appropriations of the Créole are open to debate, Gide makes Lucile sufficiently recognisable as the mythical type to help explain the moral condescension of Le Havrean society, Jérôme's ambivalence toward her, and Alissa's fears that she has inherited something of the "bel animal" from her mother. Much more difficult to account for is the second level of irony suggested by Saïd's thesis. Paul Gauguin, whose languorous islanders move the cultural myth from the West Indies to the South Pacific, seems an appropriate analogue in a discussion of cultural mythologies.

Gauguin's artistic "imperialism" seems at first to reverse the condescension at the heart of Western history. He sees in the Pacific Islanders' pantheism proof of a culture somehow superior to his own, in their women an innocent rather than fallen Eve. The specific myth of Tahiti, created most notably in Diderot's "Supplément au *Voyage de Bougainville,*[50] is a paradise of innocence and guilt-free sexuality that goes back to the eighteenth and nineteenth century. That Gaugin sees the colonised and exoticised as the cure for the culture against which he is rebelling seems, in fact, to bring the historical irony full circle. Still, Saïd's thesis insists that a Gauguin is no more able than were his colonising forefathers to "disclaim the main fact of *his* [European] actuality". The islanders remain an "Other" whose perceived worth lies in their ability to offer Gauguin the appropriate cure at this specific juncture in his life.

André Gide and his largely autobiographical Michel appropriated Africa for a similar cure in both Gide's life and *L'Immoraliste,* the literary twin to *La Porte étroite.* And if that twinship invites intertextual comparisons, it seems worthwhile to wonder how far Gide was in control of the cultural mythologies fashioned around the exotic, whether African or Créole. To what degree was he aware that his offering the African or Créole as a partial solution to a European problem was suspect, since his sympathy for these "Others" didn't necessarily bring him to a further insight into their essential nature. Again, it is necessary only to substitute Africanism and Africa or Créolism and the West Indies for Orientalism and the Orient to extend Saïd's arguments to the study of all "exotics". "Indeed, my real argument is that Orientalism is--and does not simply represent--a

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[50]Denis Diderot, *Oeuvres* (Paris: Gallimard, Pleiade, 1951), 963-1002.

considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with 'our' world."[51]

2. *Cultural and religious symbols.* Already metaphorically dense in nature, these symbols take on increased suggestiveness each time the author places them in another frame of reference. A rosary, for example, is the symbolic set of beads on which the central prayer to the Virgin Mary is recited. While any attempt to exhaust its metaphorical possibilities is doomed to failure, it seems safe to say that the ennobling power of suffering is a consistent theme throughout the fifteen "mysteries", the meditative mantras used during the recitation of the decades of Hail Mary's.[52] The mysteries, significant events in the relationship of Mary and Christ, begin with the "Annunciation" to Mary of Christ's birth, builds to the suffering of both mother and son during Christ's Passion, ends with the "Coronation", the crowning of the Blessed Virgin Mary as Queen of Heaven. When Marceline, never to be released by the grip of disease, asks Michel for her rosary, her Madonna-Christ relationship with Michel, the rosary's emphasis of the need for suffering on one hand, the cult's use of the prayer for miraculous cure on the other, all enrich the moment's suggestive possibilities. And when viewed in its relationship with the other cultural symbols in the box where Marceline keeps the rosary, it becomes one symbolic element of a larger symbolic family: the 'effeminate', "delicate", passive, fanciful, and symmetrically ordered world against which Michel is rebelling. Michel recounts,

> Je me penche pour la faire boire, et lorsqu'elle a bu et que je suis encore penché près d'elle, d'une voix que son trouble rend plus faible encore, elle me prie d'ouvrir un coffret que son regard me désigne. Le coffret est là sur la table; je l'ouvre; il est plein de rubans, de chiffons, de petits bijoux sans valeur; --que veut-elle? J'apporte près du lit la boîte; je sors un à un chaque objet. Est-ce ceci? cela?... non; pas encore; je la sens qui s'inquiète un peu. "Ah! Marceline! c'est ce petit chapelet que tu veux!" Elle s'efforce de sourire. (130)

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[51]Saïd, 12.

[52]The Mysteries are divided chronologically into three sets. 1) The "Joyful": The Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, Presentation of the Christ Child in the Temple, Finding of the Christ Child in the Temple. 2) The "Sorrowful": The Agony in the Garden, Scourging at the Pillar, Crowning with Thorns, Carrying of the Cross, Crucifixion. 3) The "Glorious": The Resurrection, Ascension, Descent of the Holy Ghost Upon the Apostles, Assumption, Coronation--Crowning of the Blessed Virgin Mary as Queen of Heaven.

The rosary is in itself a particularly rich religious symbol; its paradoxical movement from birth (the Nativity) to death (the Crucifixion), then back to rebirths both physical and spiritual (the Resurrection, the Ascension and the Assumption), already circumscribes a complete metaphorical cycle. Gide enriches the symbolic properties further by adding to the Church's cycles his own questions about the relationship of earthly and heavenly life, of physical and spiritual life, of rebirth--as Michel describes it--to the real self ("l'être authentique" [60]) and rebirth in the afterlife. This sort of symbolic multiplication is operative when Marceline presumably recites a rosary of worldly renunciation as she prepares to pass from one life to the next, while Michel seeks rebirth through the sensual savouring of the present moment. Lawrence's use of the cultural symbol is comparatively casual; still, his symbolic designs seem similarly geometric when he has Paul give a rosary to the deeply religious Miriam--she "stood painfully pulling over her head a rosary he had given her" (207)--then go on to seek a "baptism of fire in passion" (362) through the sensuous Clara.

3. *References to cultural artefacts.* Just as their religious sensitivity predisposes them to suggestions of religious symbols, Alissa's and Miriam's literary sensitivity predisposes them to the suggestions in what they read. And that vulnerability to literary influence undoubtedly increases when the male gift giver (Jérôme gives Alissa a little amethyst cross, just as Paul gives Miriam a rosary) becomes the literary adviser. A book recommended by their male mentor can provide further insight into his attitudes: perhaps the book allows him, for instance, to broach a subject that he might be uncomfortable addressing directly; always the book serves to remind both the characters and the reader that the male brings the books because he went to be educated in the outside world school while the young woman stayed at home.

Miriam and Alissa read to escape. In books they find the sensitive and heroic companions denied them by what they see as their vulgar communities. In the books they read they project themselves: Miriam worries that Paul, who "looked something like a Walter Scott hero", "might consider her simply as the swine-girl unable to perceive the princess beneath" (173). Certainly, the young D. H. Lawrence who told Jessie Chambers the beech trees' smooth branches reminded him of Maggie

Tulliver's arms would have questioned modern criticism's insistence that his favourite heroine is a "literary construct". Miriam, Lawrence's construct, does not doubt for a minute the flesh and blood existence of her favourite heroes and heroines. The narrator's declaration that a world populated by literary characters "was life to her" seems even less emphatic than Lawrence's formal suggestion. He opens "Lad and Girl Love", the chapter in which she becomes the centre of Paul's attentions, by concentrating on Miriam's characterisation. That he renders her indirectly through a description of her signature setting and acquaintances strikes a familiar note; that both setting and intimates suggest a serious confusion between the imaginative and the real does not. Even the "real" brothers whose "trampling farm-boots" muck up Miriam's clean red floor seem to come to life for her only as the vulgar step-siblings who torture the cinder-princess in the world of the folk tale.

The point here is not so much a dangerous inability to live in reality, as it is that Miriam suffers from an ailment common in the incestuously referential world of Romance. The girl who "was romantic in her soul", "sat in her bedroom aloft, alone" with "Edith's, and Lucys, and Rowenas" (173); and in Lucy, the heroine of The *Bride of Lammermoor,* Miriam finds a girl Scott describes as being "peculiarly accessible to those of a romantic cast. Her secret delight was in the old legendary tales of ardent devotion and unalterable affection. . . . This was her favoured fairy realm, and here she erected her aerial palaces".[53]

Finally, Miriam and Alissa invest in their reading a nearly religious intensity because, in Romance, literature is often the sacramental substance that signals and verifies the communion of the lovers' souls. When Werther hears Lotte speak "with such truth of *The Vicar of Wakefield*", he confides to his reader, "I could no longer contain myself , told her everything I had to say".[54] Later, Lotte's utterance of merely the name of the romantic poet "Klopstock" provokes another access of emotion: "At once I remembered the glorious ode she had in mind, and was lost in the sensations that flooded me on hearing the name. It was more than I could bear; I bowed over her hand and kissed it, shedding tears of the greatest joy" (*Werther,* 43). And when

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[53]*Bride of Lammermoor, XIV,* 45.

[54]Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther,* trans. Michael Hulse (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Classics, 1989), 39. Subsequent parenthetical page numbers refer to this edition.

Werther recites his translation of some of the songs of Ossian, both he and Lotte realise it is time to put an end to their "impossible love".

> A flood of tears poured from Lotte's eyes, easing her beset heart, and interrupting Werther's song. He threw the manuscript aside, took hold of her hand and shed the bitterest of tears. Lotte leaned on her other hand, her handkerchief to her eyes. Both of them were fearfully agitated. They could sense their own wretchedness in the fates of the noble heroes; they sensed it together, and shed tears in harmony'. (*Werther*, 125)

In the mirror of romance, Lucys and Lottes find themselves in the heroines of earlier romances, Miriams and Alissas find themselves in the Lucys and Lottes...

4. ***Romantic posing and role playing.*** Of course the "self" Alissa or Miriam finds in the mirror of romance is not her "real" self, not "*l'être authentique*" Michel hopes to find in North Africa, the separate self hidden by the mass of all acquired knowledge--"l'amas sur notre esprit de toutes connaissances acquises" (60). They have looked to religion and Romance to construct a separate and higher self, but have found there instead the types of Barthes "myths", heroines who merely mouth what Michel Foucault calls "received discourses".[55] Establishing their vulnerability to these discourses, these myths and icons, has been merely the first part of the task. Now it is necessary to detect when these icons and their discourse take possession of Miriam and Alissa, when the gestures and postures, the language, even the structures which guide their expectations are not their own. Lawrence's emphasis on Scott's influence over Miriam reduces somewhat the scope of the search. Gide demands that we become sensitive to every pattern in the history of romance and hagiography; sometimes the signal that the iconic role has begun depends on something as subtle as the play of geometry, for example, the opposition of vertical and horizontal.

Textual support will be offered later to explain why Alissa's fear of the "pagan" South and her unconscious assumption of Lucile's horizontal pose precipitate her role as the Virgin Martyr; but perhaps the geometric lines are

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[55]Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?", trans. Joseph V. Harari, reprinted in David Lodge, 196-210.

clearer in the characterisation of Alissa's intertextual sister, Marceline.[56] When Michel returns from the bed of the Arab prostitute, the dying Marceline's desperate struggle to move from the horizontal to the 'upright' reverses Michel's easy submission in the previous scene. He had allowed himself to be guided by Moktir, who took him to a Moorish café.

> Des femmes arabes y dansent . . . ce monotone glisssement. - -Une d'elles me prend par la main; je la suis; c'est la maîtresse de Moktir; il accompagne... Nous entrons tous les trois dans l'étroite et profonde chambre où l'unique meuble est un lit... Un lit très bas, sur lequel on s'assied. Un lapin blanc, enfermé dans la chambre, s'effarouche d'abord puis s'apprivoise et vient manger dans la main de Motkir. On nous apporte du café. Puis, tandis que Motkir joue avec le lapin, cette femme m'attire à elle, et je me laisse aller à elle comme on se laisse aller au sommeil... (182)

Only a short apology to his listeners and the description of his guilt-ridden return to the hotel separate the Oriental prostitute from the European wife. Gide freezes the portrait in photographic suddenness by having Michel light the lamp.

> ...J'allume.
> Marceline est assise à demi sur son lit; un de ses maigres bras se cramponne aux barreaux du lit, la tient dressée; ses draps, ses mains, sa chemise, sont inondés d'un flot de sang; son visage en est tout sali; ses yeux sont hideusement agrandis; et n'importe quel cri d'agonie m'épouvanterait moins que son silence. (183)

At first the scene seems to work on only a visual level: the eye follows the descent from walking and dancing to "deep room", "bed", "very low bed", the prostitute "sitting", "pulling", Michel letting himself go down to her as one sinks into sleep; then the eye ascends with Marceline, refusing to lie in the bed, "half sitting", the willful strength of "cramponner" opposing Michel's "letting go", the ascending rigidity of thin arms, vertical bars and Marceline "*dressée*". But Gide has long prepared the correspondence of the visual to the thematic, so that here Marceline's "uprightness" reproaches Michel as much as does her horrible silence. She is the virtuous maiden of the North opposing the luxurious seductress of the South; she is the Beatrice

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[56]"Sister" seems a safer metaphor than "twin". While both are modelled upon Gide's cousin and wife Madeleine ("Em."), Gide adds a good deal of himself to the portrait of Alissa.

who would lead Michel heavenward, fighting the Arabian prostitute who would draw him into the inferno. In Michel's adopted ethos of the South, virtue means abandon; for Marceline, as for Alissa and Jérôme, abandon equals vice, effort and struggle equal virtue.

Much of the novel's imagery supports the vertical-horizontal opposition of spiritual to sensual, heaven to hell, though the suggestions here are closer to Lawrence's sensuous "religions" than they are to those of traditional Christianity. Gide exploits even the geography to complement the cultural mythology of the supine Fatal Woman (here the "Oriental" Cleopatra recumbent on her barge is even more apropos than the languorous Créole in her hammock). Horrified by what he perceives to be the sterile "honnêteté" of the Swiss, Michel persuades Marceline to "descend" into Italy. Even the ironic Dantesque allusions in his description of the southern countryside suggest his growing preference for the abandon of the supine over the symmetrical rigidity of the vertical.

> Cette descente en Italie eut pour moi tous les vertiges d'une chute. Il faisait beau. A mesure que nous enfoncions dans l'air plus tiède et plus dense, les arbres rigides des sommets, mélèzes et sapins réguliers, faisaient place à une végétation riche de molle grâce et d'aisance (164).[57]

And the further south they descend the more Michel becomes the dominant partner, the more his northern Madonna, in whom Michel sees the grave austerity of his mother's teachings, wanes. At first it is the "delicate" and tubercular Michel who looks up from his bed at the protective nurse: "Je revois seulement, au-dessus de mon lit d'agonie, Marceline, ma femme, ma vie, se pencher" (29). They seem to meet in the horizontal on the night Michel tellingly describes as the first time he "possessed" her, but Michel wonders the next morning if he will have to nurse her--"Devrai-je un jour, à mon tour te soigner?"(74). And it is the dominant nurse who convinces the bed-ridden patient that a descent to the south will cure her. "Et de même que, de semaine en semaine lors de notre premier voyage, je marchais vers la guérison, de semaine en semaine à mesure que nous avancions vers le sud, l'état de Marceline empirait" (171).

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[57]In *Si le grain ne meurt*, (Paris: Gallimard, Collection Folio, 1955), Gide notes that in the Swiss forests, "les sapins semblaient introduire dans la nature entière une sorte de morosité et de rigidité calviniste" (323). Hereafter referred to as *Si le grain*.

5. ***Structural patterns.*** Each icon brings its own structural patterns, expectations which are as telling for the reader in their alteration as in their fulfilment. Miriam learned from the folktale, what Northrop Frye calls "naive-romance", that Cinderellas and "swine-girls" must wait for the discerning prince to recognise the princess in them; Scott and Tennyson promise that the knight will save her somehow from both loss of honour and the convent. Does Lawrence criticise Paul's failure to perform these 'heroic' tasks on all three counts? Does he blame Miriam, or does he suggest that both are victims of mythical patterns that, no matter how they are played, always leave the Maiden vulnerable, dependent, and passive?

Passivity and dependence characterise similarly the Martyr's quest. Caught between earthly and heavenly Christs, Alissa tries to follow the latter's prescription: "Malheureux l'homme qui fonde / Sur les hommes son appui" (64). But the attempt to free herself from the dependence on Jérôme for mortal joy leaves her looking heavenward for the mystic's reward. Pascal[58] had promised Alissa a higher joy, "la joie parfaite" (177), but the last line in her journal suggests the ascetic's ecstatic communion with the Divine has eluded her too: "Je voudrais mourir à présent, vite, avant d'avoir compris de nouveau que je suis seule" (178).

By definition, the classical male quest--journey into the forest, defeat of the dragon, the maiden's reward--demands action and freeing himself from dependence on others; and all too frequently the woman's passivity and dependence arise because her 'quests' are subsumed by the male's need to achieve his goals. Alissa dutifully serves as Jérôme's spiritual inspiration while he travels the Holy Land to research his history of religion; Miriam serves as Muse--"She brought forth to him his imaginations" (241)--for Paul's growth as an artist; and "waits" as patiently as her St. Catherine for Paul to overcome the lower (Clara) so he will return to her, the "higher" --"Well, he should put himself to the test" (269). In implying that she is the "higher", Miriam has confused the "myth" of quest with its reality. She and Alissa assume they are the Alpha and Omega in the quest structure: the knight sets out to win her hand, prove himself worthy of the platonic "height" she represents; she is ,then, equally the *telos*, the physical and spiritual Grail awarded him for his heroism. The questing knight's real *telos*, however, is

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[58]In her penultimate journal entry, Alissa begins by quoting Pascal's "Joie, joie, joie, pleurs de joie".

less altruistic: he searches for manhood, the "authentic self". Lawrence and Gide emphasise the disparity between myth and reality in having Michel, Jérôme, and Paul "kill" the faithful maiden, an ironic structural twist that recasts her as the dragon that stands between the knight and success.

6. *Language and linguistic registers.* All the evidence discussed to this point depends so much on language that it is difficult to address the importance of language in isolation. The language of quests is the metaphor of journey, conceits in which direction and mode of travel are married to the appropriate destination. To arrive at Alissa's heaven, she and Jérôme must force themselves along narrow paths and through strait gates; most importantly, each must travel alone: "C'est tout seul que chacun de nous doit gagner Dieu" (36). Romance's exotic Fatal Woman inevitably breathes air that can be simultaneously heavily "perfumed" and "Orientalement pur". Male narrators create her with language as sibilant as the serpent she represents, as soft, round, and "svelte" as her body--"voluptueuse, languissante, silencieuse, sensuelle, souple, séduissante". The rosary brings with it the language of religious renunciation and ecstasy, language which often lends itself to playful double-entendres: "grace", "womb", "annunciation", "resurrection", "ascension", "assumption", "agony", "crowning with thorns", "carrying of the cross", "crucifixion". When Miriam discovers Paul, "slender and firm", repairing his "injured umbrella", her "quivering as at some "Annunciation" (205) has arguably more to do with phallic than with maternal recognition. As has already been suggested, Romance frequently freezes its scenes iconographically; the language is that of doors opened and corners turned, the wonder of sudden perception. Werther "opened the door and beheld the most charming scene he had ever set eyes on" (*Werther,* 37), a Lotte who had been cutting bread for her younger siblings since time immemorial; Miriam "turn[s] a corner in the lane" to find her "Annunciation", complete with dramatic lightning--"one rift of rich gold in that colourless grey evening seemed to make [Paul] stand out in dark relief" (205). The horrible gothic portrait of Marceline awaits only Michel's lighting of the lamp; Jérôme, as if he had just taken his seat in a theatre, records this scene from the Bucolin's darkened staircase:

> . . . plein de stupeur, je vois ceci: au milieu de la chambre aux rideaux clos, mais où les bougies de deux candélabres répandent une clarté joyeuse, ma tante est couchée sur une chaise longue; à ses pieds, Robert et Juliette; derrière elle, un inconnu jeune homme en uniforme de lieutenant. (24)

All these examples, of course, are related directly or indirectly to the language of cultural artefacts. And since any attempt to address all the attendant discourses would demand the sort of arbitrary but helpful catalogue Barthes provides in his *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* ,[59] the few instances cited here will concentrate on *how* Gide and Lawrence incorporate the language inherited with their icons. Gide, a master of linguistic counterpoint, fashions an entire conceit from his title to define the Fatal Woman and the icons that oppose her. In Pastor Vautier's sermon on the narrow path to heaven, Jérôme assigns the metaphors of expansiveness to Lucile's room, those of restrictiveness to Alissa's. To find the Lucile of the light and low-necked blouses ("corsages légers et largement ouverts" [15]) one takes the "chemin spacieux" (28); for the "grave" and restrictive world of Alissa, take the "voie resserrée" that leads to her narrow door: "Et cette porte devenait encore la porte même de la chambre d'Alissa" (28).

As a subtle counterpoint to his piling on of iconic language--Miriam anticipates "tragedy, sacrifice and sorrow" (255)--Lawrence frequently fashions several suggestive variations from a single word. The verb "to bow" and the dramatic gesture it signifies identify Miriam as both humble "handmaiden" and renouncer of her own physical attractiveness. The Miriam who is "full-breasted and luxuriously formed" (256), "in her bowed, meditative bearing, looked dwarfed beside" Clara (222); and when Paul cruelly explains to her how Clara's mouth and throat are " made for passion", "Miriam bowed a little lower" (225). She "bowed her head moodily" when Paul admits "I don't think I love you as a man ought to love his wife" (264), "bowed to his beliefs" when his thoughts take a decisive turn toward Clara.

A discussion of linguistic register might recall Terry Eagleton's distinction between literary language and that of everyday speech: "If you approach me at a bus stop and murmur 'Thou still unravished bride of quietness', then I am instantly aware that I am in the presence of the literary. I know this because the texture, rhythm and resonance of your words are in

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[59]Roland Barthes, *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil [Collection "Tel Quel"], 1977). See, too, Denis de Rougement, *Love in the Western World* (Princeton: University Press, 1983).

excess of their abstractable meaning. . ."[60] If Miriam approaches us at the bus stop of literary realism to enthuse "Almost passionately, she wanted to be with him [Paul] when she stood before the flowers. They were going to have a communion together, something that thrilled her, something holy" (195), then we might suspect that we are in the presence of heightened discourse, a pastiche of phrases and sentiments Miriam inherited from the literature of romance and evangelical Christianity. Here *everything* is "in excess".

A reader might find, for example, the lover's ego in excess. Too often one hears behind the speaker's ostensible concern for the love partner a panegyric to himself. Jérôme seems more concerned in the following passage with his ascendancy to the Protective Knight than he does with Alissa's suffering; even the confusion of pity for love, and Jérôme's "vertical" to Alissa's relative "horizontal" complement the language of condescension. Ironically, Jérôme is reacting to his discovery of Lucile's infidelity, a reality Alissa has obviously known about for some time:

> Sans doute je ne comprenais que bien imparfaitement la cause de la détresse d'Alissa, mais je sentais intensément que cette détresse était beaucoup trop forte pour cette petite âme palpitante, pour ce frêle corps tout secoué de sanglots.
>
> Je restais debout près d'elle, qui restait agenouillée; je ne savais rien exprimer du transport nouveau de mon coeur; mais je pressias sa tête contre mon coeur et sur son front mes lèvres par où mon âme s'écoulait. Ivre d'amour, de pitié, d'un indistinct mélange d'enthousiasme, d'abnégation, de vertu, j'en appelais à Dieu de toutes mes forces et m'offrais, ne concevant plus d'autre but à ma vie que d'abriter cette enfant contre la peur, contre le mal, contre la vie. (25-6)

Perhaps these cataracts of language seems excessive, too, because they violate romance's own implied rule of ineffability. They ignore similarly the rhetorical device in which the speaker's or writer's admission of failure to find the words, in fact, uses words to suggest untold depth. Keats's preference for "unheard" melodies and "tuneless numbers"[61] suggests, among other things, that the highest perceptions lie beyond language's ability to communicate them. He knows well enough to leave Cortez "silent,

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[60]Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: an Introduction* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1983), 2.

[61]John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn", "Ode to Psyche", *Norton*, 1851, 1849.

upon a peak in Darien".[62] Werther break off his attempt to describe his visions of Lotte with the confession "I do not know how to put it" (*Werther*, 105). Michel's attempts to tell his tale "simply" are consistent with his knowledge of language's failure: "Ah! je voudrais qu'en chaque phrase, ici, toute une moisson de volupté se distille..." (174). Even Jérôme perceives in Alissa's eyes "un indicible amour", (153), and is quick to criticise Aunt Felicie's attempts to speak of his love--"Il fallait endurer la maladroite bonhomie de ma tante . . . d'entendre traiter si sommairement des sentiments que les mots les plus purs et les plus doux me semblaient brutaliser encore" (71).

Arguably, most excessive of all is the lovers' confidence that this is the discourse in which they find their real and separate selves. The remove from the authentic self may indeed be twofold, a plagiarism of both language and emotion. Emma Bovary discovers too late that she had received both her language and her emotional expectations from Romance's discourse on love:

> Avant qu'elle se mariât, elle avait cru avoir de l'amour; mais le bonheur qui aurait dû résulter de cet amour n'étant pas venu, il fallait qu'elle se fût trompée, songeait-elle. Et Emma cherchait à savoir ce que l'on entendait au juste dans la vie par les mots, de *félicité*, de *passion* et d'*ivresse*, qui lui avaient paru si beaux dans les livres.[63]

Professor John Cameron posits that "Emma's desire appears to be self constituted by the received discourse in which it is articulated: what Emma 'wants' is what that discourse articulates *for* her, whether she realizes it or not".[64]

The déjà-lu quality of Jérôme and Alissa's discourse suggests they too have consciously and unconsciously borrowed the language of their relationship. Gide, in fact, sometimes draws attention to the theft by providing the source in the text. Denis de Rougemont, in *Love in the Western World*, includes "the symbolism of the 'mirror' for imperfect love reflecting perfect love" as one of the topics common to both the troubadours and the

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[62]Ibid., "On First looking into Chapman's Homer".

[63]Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* , ed. Mark Overstall (London: Harrap, 1979), 33.

[64]John Cameron, quoted from notes for his course, "The Mode of Romance", at Amherst College.

great mystics of the sixteenth century.[65] In granting the contemplative faculty the highest place in their hierarchy of values, Jérôme and Alissa remember Goethe's variation in speaking of Mme de Stein: "'Il serait beaut de voir se réfléchir le monde dans cette âme" (44). Jérôme later claims the metaphor as his own "lyrisme" when he tells Juliette, "Oh! si seulement nous pouvions, nous penchant sur l'âme qu'on aime, voir en elle, comme en un miroir, quelle image nous y posons!" (49-50). In that same conversation, the reader learns Jérôme has recited Baudelaire's "Chant D'Automne" to Alissa: "--Bientôt nous plongerons dans les froides ténèbres" (47). Gide does not include Baudelaire's second stanza in the *récit*, though Jérôme's lyricism seems to recall it in recounting his agony during the following winter: "L'épais brouillard d'hiver m'enveloppait; ma lampe d'étude, et toute la ferveur de mon amour et de ma foi écartaient mal, hélas! la nuit et la froid de mon coeur" (90). Jérôme establishes the same elaborate parallelism of the external natural process and his inner psychological state, though he tellingly equates his study lamp rather than the sun with the potential fervour of his heart.

> Tout l'hiver va rentrer dans mon être: colère,
> Haine, frissons, horreur, labeur dur et forcé,
> Et, comme le soleil dans son enfer polaire,
> Mon coeur ne sera plus qu'un bloc rouge et glacé.[66]

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Narrative Point of View. This is treacherous terrain. To find dramatic irony behind every flight in heightened linguistic registers would be to ignore Lawrence's and Gide's own passionate natures. One need not read very far into Gide's journals or Lawrence's essays to find linguistic flights that, one assumes, attest to a passionate sincerity that hopes to persuade rather than alienate. How can one, then, presume to make what may be nothing more than subjective distinctions? When Jérôme apostrophises, "O feinte exquise de l'amour, de l'excès même de l'amour, par quel secret chemin tu nous menas du rire aux pleurs et de la plus naïve joie à l'exigence de la vertu!" (46), by what criteria does one confirm the suspicion that Gide

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[65]Denis de Rougement, *Love in the Western World*, trans. Montgomery Belgion, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), 160.

[66]*Fleurs du mal*, LVI.

is mocking his narrator? By what criteria does one decide Alissa's equally heightened prayer is meant to elevate her in the reader's eyes? "Seigneur! Je crie à Vous de toutes mes forces. Je suis dans la nuit; j'attends l'aube. Je crie à Vous jusqu'à mourir. Venez désaltérer mon coeur. De ce bonheur j'ai soif aussitôt... Ou dois-je me persuader de l'avoir?" (177). Exiled from the text, both excerpts seem filled with ironic potential; it would be difficult to argue that the forms or language in one were less plagiaristic than in the other. A complete response, then, would be long and complex, demanding the consideration of myriad textual contingencies concerning the excerpts' positions in the dramatic structure, the different relationship between speaker and audience in the two excerpts, the way in which Gide has used the already familiar language and conceits elsewhere in the text. Such arguments will be conducted in the body of the dissertation. A partial answer needs mention here, one found in a sort of credibility scale Gide fashions from the tensions among the various narrative points of view employed throughout the twin *récits* .

The first tension is intertextual but, again, one that seems warranted by Gide's own insistence on the complementary natures of the two *récits*. The very genesis of both relied on this interdependence: "Je n'aurais pu écrire *L'Immoraliste*, si je n'avais su que j'écrirais aussi *La Porte étroite*".[67] Both *récits* are in the tradition of the confession, a narrative form that succeeds or fails--for the narrator, at least--according to the degree of credibility established with the audience. In the terms of the religious analogy, the readers takes the priest's part, granting or denying absolution according to their belief in the penitent's sincerity. Michel withholds nothing, understanding perhaps, as does Coleridge's Ancient Mariner,[68] that the telling of the tale is itself part of the penance. After relating his "sin" with the prostitute, Michel interjects, "Ah! je pourrais ici feindre ou me taire--mais que m'importe à moi ce récit, s'il cesse d'être véritable?..." (182). True, he cannot quite bring himself to name his worst offence, but he implies as candidly as he is able that he killed Marceline--"Ce n'est pas, croyez-moi, que je suis fatigué de

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[67]In a letter to André Beaunier (12th July, 1914), cited by J.C. Davies, *Gide: L'Immoraliste and La Porte étroite* (London: Edward Arnold [Studies in French Literature 12], 1968), 7.

[68]Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", *Norton* , 1543. the Mariner explains to his listener how, upon his return to the mainland, he was made to repent for killing the Albatross: "Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched / With a woeful agony,/ Which forced me to begin my tale;/ And then it left me free./ Since then, at an uncertain hour,/ That agony returns:/ And till my ghastly tale is told,/ This heart within me burns".

mon crime, s'il vous plaît de l'appeler ainsi . . ." (185). Jérôme's confession begins with a promise of openness--"J'écrirai donc très simplement mes souvenirs" (11)--but the reader-confessor soon suspects, this dissertation will argue, that what starts as a confession becomes increasingly an apologia, a conscious explanation of why he should not be held responsible for Alissa's death.

Gide tips the scales of credibility in Michel's favour through two other formal decisions: presenting the confessions in different narrative frames, and choosing for his narrators different modes of confession. As Jérôme's sole confessor, we are forced to rely on his word. When we find him to be alternately equivocal and insensitive, his word undermines where it hopes to strengthen his case. In *L'Immoraliste* , Gide provides a first narrator, who acts as both a character reference for Michel and as a fellow priest to assist the reader. The traditional narrative device of the indulgent friend's reaction invites us to share his sympathy.[69] Jérôme has to assure his reader that he will tell his tale "simply", which is understood in this case to be a synonym for "truly". Before we hear a word of Michel's story, the narrator has already attested to the simplicity and understatement that characterise Michel throughout the evening: "Michel nous a reçus sans témoigner de joie; très simple, il semblait craindre toute manifestation de tendresse" (13). Far from doubting Michel's veracity, the narrator perceives in Michel's confession a truth about his *own* authentic self: "Mais il en est plus d'un aujourd'hui, je le crains, qui oserait en ce récit se reconnaître" (10). Far from condemning Michel, the narrator finds himself to be Michel's vicarious accomplice: "De ne savoir où la désapprouver, dans la lente explication qu'il en donna, nous en faisait presque complices" (184).

To disagree with the narrator would be to take the position of Job's "comforters", to whom the narrator likens himself at the start of Michel's story--"pareils aux trois amis de Job, nous attendîmes" (13). Gide remembers what the narrator has presumably forgotten: that Job's "friends" choose to condescend rather than comfort, bringing down upon themselves the "wrath" of the Old Testament God.[70] Every detail in the setting, down to the

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[69]See Chateaubriand's *René*, Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*, Constant's *Adolphe*.

[70]"My wrath is kindled against thee . . . for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job has" (Job 42:7).

listener's "horizontal" posture and the illumination implied through the rising sun, suggests Michel's veracity and the listeners' need for empathy:

> Je t'adresse donc ce récit, tel que Denis, Daniel et moi l'entendîmes: Michel le fit sur la terrasse où près de lui nous étions étendus dans l'ombre et dans la clarté des étoiles. A la fin du récit nous avons vu le jour se lever sur la plaine . (12)

It is interesting to examine Gide's choice to have Michel tell his tale and to have Jérôme write his in the light of Terry Eagleton's comment that "Western philosophy has been 'phonocentric', centred on the 'living voice' and deeply suspicious of script".[71] Barthes makes the distinction between apparent veracity of speech and the self-consciousness of writing in *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture* :

> Ce qui oppose l'écriture à la parole, c'est que la première *paraît* toujours symbolique, introversée, tournée ostensiblement du côté d'un versant secret du langage, tandis que la seconde n'est qu'une durée de signes vides dont le mouvement seul est significatif. Toute la parole se tient dans cette usure des mots, dans cette écume toujours emportée plus loin, et il n'y a de parole que là où le langage fonctionne avec évidence comme une voration qui n'enlèverait que la pointe mobile des mots; l'écriture, au contraire, est toujours enracinée dans un au-delà du langage, elle se développe comme un germe et non comme une ligne, elle manifeste une essence et menace d'un secret, elle est une contre-communication, elle intimide.[72]

Jérôme's "écriture" threatens because the reader suspects that behind it lies the careful construction of a self-serving order. Michel, in fact, much like Coleridge's Mariner and Conrad's Marlow,[73] seems[74] vulnerable to the spontaneous risk of having to let the tale tell itself.[75]

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[71]Eagleton, 131.

[72]Roland Barthes, *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture* (Paris: Editions du Seuil [Collection Points], 1953, 1972), 18.

[73] In Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, ed. Robert Kimbrough (New York: W.W. Norton [Critical Edition], 1971), the principal narrator, Marlow, sits in the lotus position, seemingly relating a tale that unfolds its essential self in a sort of Buddhistic enlightenment. The first narrator , who serves much the same function as Michel's first narrator, comments three times on the mystical quality of the telling. Albert Sonnenfeld argues "Conrad is, in fact, technically more advanced than Gide in his exploitation of the frame". "On Readers and Reading in *La Porte étroite* and *L'Immoraliste*", *Romanic Review* 67 (1976), 182.

[74]Since Gide's *écriture* creates both Jérôme's récit and Michel's tale, the latter's spontaneity is, of course, a literary illusion. The analysis (as opposed to the "listening to" with the

Intratextually, Gide chips away at Jérôme's credibility through Alissa's letters and journals, a counterpoint written account of most of the same events covered in the *récit*. Dependent in the first four chapters almost entirely upon Jérôme for even the reconstruction of Alissa's words in remembered dialogue, the reader welcomes Alissa's letters for the alternate perspective they provide. In the last four chapters, Gide divides the text almost evenly between Jérôme's memories and Alissa's missives.[76] Frozen forever in the immediacy of the present, the letters possess a veracity missing in the world Jérôme pieces together from memory, a world, the reader begins to suspect, created to lead toward a predetermined end. Jérôme's defensive editorialising--"Les lettres d'Alissa devinrent à partir de ce moment, plus troubles et plus pressantes" (111); "Je reçus le surlendemain l'étrange lettre que voici" (129)--fuels suspicion further. Why does Jérôme provide only the malleable stuff of paraphrase for nearly all of *his* letters to Alissa? Why does he transcribe some of Alissa's letter and omit others? "Je vous l'ai dit: je ne transcris point toutes ces lettres" (106). Increasingly the reader's interpretations of Alissa's letters begin to diverge from Jérôme's. Albert Sonnenfeld, suggesting that Jérôme "appropriates" even Alissa's journal to his ends, questions the spirit of Jérôme's claim to have presented Alissa's entries "sans commentaire":

> What proportion of the pages in the diary does Jérôme transcribe? What did the suppressed pages contain? What were the reflections those pages inspired in Jérôme as reader?

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requisite suspended disbelief) of almost any page will show a literary sophistication which is not plausibly improvised by a non-professional storyteller. Still, as Barthes implies, credibility relies on perception, what "seems" to be ("paraît"), what is "*ostensiblement*" sincere. Once we acknowledge the presence of art, we know we are in a world where perceived credibility relies on the writer's mastery of illusion .

[75]Arthur E. Babcock, in an enlightening essay on Jérôme's insistence that "language is a superior reality that shelters him from life" (40), is of a similar mind: "No matter how convinced the reader may be of Michel's subtlety, no matter how much Michel's refined style may clash with the supposed circumstances of his spoken narrative, Michel is *telling* his story, and Jérôme is *writing* his. The immediate effect of this change is to render the beginning of the book more abruptly self-conscious than the beginning of *L'Immoraliste*". *Portrait of Artists: Reflexivity in Gidean Fiction, 1902-46* (York, South Carolina: French Literature Publications Co., 1982), 30.

[76]See Christopher Shorley, "On the Way to the Summit: Narrative Modes in *La Porte étroite*", *Nottingham French Studies*, 22.2 (1983): 20-31, for a statistical break down of the narrative modes.

> Is not the choice of pages to transcribe itself the *commentaire* Jérôme denies making?[77]

Alissa's first letters are filled with the same "myths" that fill Jérôme's; the last begin to wonder if, like Emma Bovary, she and Jérôme have mistaken a lover's discourse for the reality of love: "Je sentais trop que notre correspondence tout entière n'était qu'un grand mirage, que chacun de nous n'écrivait hélas! qu'à soi-même et que...Jérôme! Jérôme! ah! que nous restions toujours éloignés!" (120) And again: "Ton amour était surtout un amour de tête, un bel entêtement intellectuel de tendresse et de fidélité" (121). The journal that begins as a way to fight loneliness becomes an instrument of further demystification, a systematic peeling away of inherited discourse and myths. Alissa abandons the masters of "grandiloquence" and "pathetic intonation" for literary models who communicate "simply": "Ce sont là d'humbles âmes qui causent avec moi simplement, s'exprimant de leur mieux, et dans la société desquelles je me plais. Je sais d'avance que nous ne céderons, ni elles à aucun piège du beau langage, ni moi, en les lisant, à aucune profane admiration" (138). Finding that *she* has fallen into the trap of beautiful language in her early entries, Alissa attempts to strip them of literary self-consciousness:

> "En en relisant quelques pages, j'y avais surpris un absurde, un coupable souci de bien écrire... que je *lui* [Jérôme] dois...
>
> Comme si, dans ce cahier que je n'ai commencé que pour m'aider à me passer de lui, je continuais à *lui* écrire.
>
> J'ai déchiré toutes les pages qui m'ont paru *bien écrites.* (Je sais ce que j'entends par là.) J'aurais dû déchirer toutes celles où il est question de lui. J'aurais dû tout déchirer... Je n'ai pas pu. (167)

Alissa is the first to admit her own defeat; and only one of several ironies here is that in attempting to demystify the lover's discourse, she simply exchanges it for an equally dangerous martyr's discourse. Still, Alissa's increasingly fragmented journal does appear to flow from her with the sincerity Gide hoped to attain in his own journals.[78] And in relating what is self-consciously "bien écrite" to Jérôme, Alissa unknowingly gives the lie to his promise to tell his tale "simply": "J'écrirai donc très simplement mes

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[77] Albert Sonnenfeld, "On Readers and Reading in *La Porte étroite* and *L'Immoraliste*", *Romanic Review* 67 (1976), 174.

[78] *Journal*, 31 December 1891, 27: "La chose la plus difficile, quand on a commencé d'écrire, c'est d'être sincère".

souvenirs, et s'ils sont en lambeaux par endoits, je n'aurai recours à aucune invention pour les rapiécer ou les joindre" (11).

The very nature of the "'bien écrite" demands that its authors patch and connect any apparent flaws in its illusion of a preordained order. It is Alissa's journal that refuses patching, that runs the risk of spontaneity. By ending his second *récit* with Alissa's naked confessions, then, Gide has come full circle, returning to the narrative honesty with which Michel professed to begin. Barthes imagines a linguistic utopia where writers might shed "l'écriture" for a "non-style", an "oral-style", "un degré zéro" or "un degré parlé de l'écriture".[79] Alissa falls short of this Eden, but she has come close enough to the freshness of the spoken word to frame with Michel the falseness of Jérôme's "well-written" book.

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Mark Kinkead-Weekes's thoughtful warning to those who would collapse Paul's attitudes with Lawrence's defines well the approach to narrative point of view in the present thesis. The argument addresses Paul's cruel attack on Miriam in the "communion" of the wild rose bush, but might apply to most of *Sons and Lovers* .

> But we cannot take Paul's response as simply valid. . . . The dramatic presentation of Miriam creates her in depth and complexity, so that we often become aware that what we know of Miriam ourselves is being simplified or distorted in Paul's rationalisation of his own recoil. We have to allow for the pressure on him, towards that recoil, of the possessive love and jealousy of Mrs Morel, whose judgements he often echoes....We have to allow for the validity of Miriam's criticisms of Paul--"She wondered why he always claimed to be normal when he was disagreeable" (259). And we are affected in various ways by the flux and reflux of the narrator's sympathies. Sometimes he is involved or even identifies with Paul, seeing as he does, blind with his blindnesses. Sometimes he is detached and critical, aware of how Paul's relationship with his mother has made him both victim and victimiser. The fictive life consists in complex interplay between presentation (both dramatic and

[79] *Le Degré zéro*, 64.

> symbolic), allowing us to see and feel for ourselves, and a struggle to *analyse* in which both the narrator and ourselves have to be involved--involved with Paul's deficiencies, among other things, in order to become capable of understanding and sympathy without simplification. But "D. H. Lawrence", because he is dramatist, symbolist and narrative ironist, as well as commentator, must never be reduced to the narrator's commentary.[80]

Kinkead-Weekes suggests, then, that the reader's task in balancing narrative points of view is much the same as it is with Gide's *récits* , even though Lawrence employs a third person narrator. Here the tensions arise, firstly, between the various central intelligences for whom the narrative voice speaks and, secondly, from the conflicts between any of those different points of view with the drama--the disparity between what is *said* and what is *shown* . A reading that assumes the narrator's sympathy rests almost exclusively with Paul might, for example, conclude that Lawrence blames Miriam entirely for modeling herself after the icons of renunciation. A reading that struggles to balance the various narrative tensions would find that Lawrence faults Paul as well; it might even conclude, as does Diane Bonds, that Paul encourages Miriam's emulation of these icons because *he* "needs for Miriam to remain non-sexual and virginal".[81]

Paul dismisses Miriam as a "mystic nun", but Lawrence suggests on several occasions that Miriam, while opposing the "brutal", remains receptive to physical contact. When Paul complains "I'm so damned spiritual with *you* always", Miriam thinks, "Then why don't you be otherwise?" (226). When he repeats the charge, the narrator describes how Miriam "took her finger from her mouth with a little pop, and looked up at him almost challenging". The scene's quick narrative shifts--from Paul's perspective to Miriam's, and then to the objectively dramatic--are typical of much of the novel, particularly of those chapters that concentrate on the Paul-Miriam relationship.

The iconic scenarios under study here reside most frequently at the intersection of the dramatic and symbolic; dramatic because they encourage melodramatic posture as much as they do dialogue; symbolic because,

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[80]Mark Kinkead-Weekes, "Eros and Metaphor: Sexual Relationship in the Fiction of Lawrence", Anne Smith, 104-5.

[81]Diane S. Bonds, "Miriam, the Narrator, and the Reader of *Sons and Lovers* ", *D. H. Lawrence Review* 14.2 (1981), 143.

firstly, the icons are cultural types and, secondly, because they have taken on the concentrated metaphorical nature characteristic of all myth. The "narrative ironist" in Lawrence and Gide demands that readers be as attentive to the differences as they are to the similarities in the allusive mythical scenarios. It might be more enlightening to wonder, for example, why the Fatal Woman in Clara does not destroy Paul than to note that "Gyp" leads William to his death.

Finally, the mystic in both Lawrence and Gide should encourage a healthy humility in the critic. Alissa and Miriam meditate through prayer and dream, Lawrence and Gide through their art. Any rigid classification of iconic scenarios, then, is bound to fail, since meditation is more concerned with a disinterested exploration of all the elements of a question than it is with the reduction to a single solution. Lawrence's and Gide's fiction does not demand the coherence of an essay; it allows suggestion without commitment, contradiction and ambivalence, without the authors having to set out on a pellucid ideological mission. Without using Keats's "negative capability" as an excuse for ambiguity, the present thesis has attempted to resist "any irritable reaching after fact and reason"[82] where paradox and a healthy ambivalence seem more apropos.

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[82]John Keats, in a letter to his brothers, *The Letters of John Keats 1814-21*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), I, 193.

I. The Madonna: The Protean Virgin Mary

Overview

Christ's mother has proven to be an easy prey for the mythmakers precisely because there is so little history here to empty. Bound by only a handful of often contradictory biblical references, her popular historians have been able to fashion her into whatever form will serve best as the immediate anodyne for whatever ails the Fathers of the Church or the members of her cult. Predisposed by both culture and character to emulate the Marian model, Alissa and Miriam are encouraged in their efforts by their own mythmakers, Jérôme and Paul. The two aspiring Christs, torn by their own internecine emotional conflicts, sculpt with word and perspective their Madonnas into increasingly impossible iconic combinations. The Mater Dolorosa who comforts the suffering Lamb of God is persecuted by the Christ who needs to be about a father's business; the Virgin who fulfils her lover's platonic ideal finds herself charged with sterility when she rejects her lover's advances, discarded when she acquiesces; the humility of the handmaid flatters her hero one day, inflames him the next. Mortal women riven by a legend's polyvalent postures, inevitably find that the same imaginative young men who cast them according to their needs become, ironically, iconoclasts when they no longer need their Madonnas.

A pair of biblical references frame the image of the Sorrowful Mother, while the drama and icons of her cult heighten further the portrait of maternal suffering. Luke is the only evangelist to record Simeon's prophecy when Mary presented Jesus in the temple on the day of her purification. The seer suddenly interrupts his revelation to Mary of her son's messianic task to predict that her sorrow will follow the same course as the Christ's: "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also" (Luke 2:35). Finding here a prophecy of the soldier's spear that would pierce the side of the crucified Jesus (John 19:34), the Fathers of the Church heard in the prediction that the mother's spiritual martyrdom would complement her son's physical Passion, that her suffering would bring the gift of grace to complement the new life purchased by Christ's

agony.[1] St. Ambrose heard in Simeon's words both the suffering born of Mary's foreknowledge of the Passion and the particular agony she suffers at the foot of her son's cross.[2] In one of his two references to Mary, the evangelist John provides a scene emotionally accessible to any mother who has vicariously suffered through her child:

> Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.
>
> When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! (John 19:25-26)

Where John allowed Mary's silence to express the ineffable sorrow, the Church chose to speak. The Second Vatican Council, following the traditional patristic interpretations, declared Mary "united with Him [Jesus] in suffering as He died on the cross".[3] By going on to proclaim that, "in an utterly singular way she cooperated . . . in the Saviour's work of restoring supernatural life to souls", the Council members praise as much as they dare the "mother to us in the order of grace". Beyond their suggestion that Mary is Co-Redeemer with Christ of all her children, the cardinals seem to equate the intensity of the mother's suffering with that of the son. The drama and images of the Marian Cult go even farther. The celebrated thirteenth-century Latin hymn *Stabat Mater* concentrates on Mary's position at the foot of the Cross, metaphorically equating her physical and pathic proximity--"Stabat mater dolorosa/ Juxta crucem lacrimosa,/ Dum pendebat filius. . . ."[4] Another Franciscan poet extrapolates on Mary's vigil after John leaves off, having Mary tell her new "son" that she now feels Simeon's sword,

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[1]Warner, 210, draws on St. Bernard's sermon 29, *In Cantica Canticarum* , cited in *The Life and Works of St. Bernard* , ed. Dom Mabillon, trans. Samuel J. Eales, (London, 1896), vol. 4: 191.

[2] Cited in Mary Clayton's The *Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 12."Neither writing nor history teaches us that Mary passed away from this life with the suffering of a bodily death; for not the soul but the body is pierced by a material sword. And it therefore shows the wisdom of Mary who was not at all ignorant of the heavenly mystery".

[3]*Lumen Gentium*, chap. VIII, para. 61, eds. Walter Abbott and Joseph Gallagher, *The Documents of Vatican Two* (New York, 1966), 91. Cited in Warner, 18.

[4]"The sorrowful mother/ Was standing weeping/ Beside the cross/ While her son was/ Hanging on it". *The Penguin Book of Latin Verse*, ed. Frederick Brittain (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1962), 246-9.

that she is embracing her son and his suffering on the same crucifix.[5] Finally, the icon of the Pietà, in concentrating on the moments after Christ's Passion, suggests that Mary's suffering outstrips that of her Son. For thirty-three years she agonised with the foreknowledge of her son's Passion; during his crucifixion, maternal empathy lifted her up to share his suffering on the cross; now that she holds the lifeless son on her lap, the cradled mortal child is beyond pain while the mortal mother begins another stage of grief, one known to the mother of every executed prisoner, of every soldier sacrificed to a 'higher' cause.[6]

To those who would emulate the Virgin, the soul-pierced Mary at the foot of the cross adds the qualities of sufferance, pity, and indefatigable support to the peacefulness and tenderness that characterize the Virgin of the Nativity stories. Lawrence and Gide appropriate the Mater Dolorosa icon to underline the slippage from pain in the face of atrocious suffering to the self-indulgent melancholy of their Madonna and Jesus posturers alike. The mood demanded here is one of perpetual mourning, Hamlet's heroic melancholy, the Keatsean "pleasant-pain",[7] the Mona Lisa's sweet-sadness, the "mélancolie presque douce" Jérôme associates with Fongueusemare (147). Under the sway of these qualities, within this air, the son-lover sees his own melancholy sensitivity as a sign he will suffer pleasantly at the hands of a brutish society. His physical delicateness, far from a sign of male weakness, symbolises for him a spiritual sensitivity that sets him above his coarser fellows. He is the Christ, whether his messianic mission be artistic or academic. His mother-lover is the muse, the vessel of his apotheosis, but the ministry is his alone; her only task is the eternal conservation of the home, the refuge for the persecuted Christ. Without her waiting, her passivity, the son's activity would be impossible. She encourages the Christ's childishness and sickness, the only states that allow her activity. Apart from her role as solicitous nurse, suffering more than her sensitive son

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[5]Jacapone da Todi, "Donna del Paradiso", *Oxford Book of Italian Verse, Thirteenth to Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 20-25. Cited in Warner, 213.

[6]Any potential knowledge of the Resurrection serves to console little here. In paintings of the Pietà the promise of spring is often found in the landscape, but seldom in Mary's expression. The statues that have moved so many with their easily 'understood' emotions provide no counterbalance to Mary's human suffering.

[7]John Keats, "Ode to Psyche", *Norton*, 1851, one of the four odes for which Alissa would give nearly all of Shelley and Byron (103).

becomes her one path toward heroism, the sword-pierced soul her only reward.

Chapter One: Alissa as Madonna

> *I have been made the gate of heaven; I have been made the door of the son of God. I have been made that closed door which the prophet Ezechiel saw in a vision, about which he says prophesying of me: I saw the closed gate in the dwelling of the Lord; and the angel said to me, This gate which you see, it will not be opened, and no man will pass through it, because the Lord alone will enter and will go out through it and it will be closed eternally.*[1]
>
> **--Old English lyric**

1. "Mater Dolorosa"

A cuckolded father and a mourning aunt first encourage the Mater Dolorosa in Alissa. Madame Palissier, Jérôme, and even Alissa agree that a wife should assume the maternal responsibility for her spouse. Alissa, who worries that she might be "trop âgée" for Jérôme, understands early which epithets of the Mater Dolorosa's liturgy figure most importantly in the care of her "remarquable" cousin. She will need to "succour the wretched, help the faint-hearted, comfort the sorrowing",[2] "deliver [Jérôme] continually from all danger"; for under her protection, he will "seek refuge", echoing the prayer of the Marian chorus: "Hail, holy Queen, mother of mercy . . . . To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping from this valley of tears".[3]

Gide exploits both the narrative and the cinematic to recall the litany. Jérôme, who tells us that Alissa is walking her father "comme un

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[1]Cited by Clayton, 200.

[2]Geoffrey Ashe, *The Virgin* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), 198.

[3]The recently successful rock-and-roll adaptation of *Salve Regina* testifies to the continuing popularity of the twelfth-century song, still sung by children in Marian processions throughout the Catholic world.

enfant" (33), falls prey to Gide's dramatic irony when he shows himself to be the other infant, childishly eavesdropping on his beloved and uncle. The cuckolded M. Bucolin who, like the banished Oedipus, looks to his daughter for "soutien, conseil et réconfort" (32), knows well his nephew's needs: "Il faut de la confiance, du soutien, de l'amour" (34). Alissa addresses this synthesis of mother and lover when Jérôme claims that some of the conversation with her infant father had been lost in the intervening hedgerow.

> "Quand il a parlé de soutien dans la vie, j'ai répondu que tu avais ta mère.
> --Oh! Alissa, tu sais bien que je ne l'aurai pas toujours... Et puis ce n'est pas la même chose..."
> Elle baissa le front:
> C'est aussi ce qu'il m'a répondu". (35)

Not the same thing, perhaps, but Jérôme's maternal diptych of Miss Ashburton and Madame Palissier worry little about possible distinctions between a wife's duties as mother and lover. The self-effacing Englishwoman assures Jérôme of the equation's symmetry --"Ta mère, c'est Alissa qui la rappelle" (45); Madame Palissier concentrates on its pragmatism: initially loth to hand the maternal reins to Lucile's daughter, when she feels her forces declining, Jérôme's mother gathers her son and Alissa "dans un même embrassement maternel" (37). Here Jérôme stumbles again on Gide's linguistic irony, which places the maternal force on two sides of the triangle. When Madame Palissier dies, Alissa sorely regrets not having spoken to her "les quelques mots qui lui eussent donné ce grand contentement qu'elle attendait" (39). Jérôme fares better, providing his mother in their last conversation with the reassurance she so desperately seeks.

> "Mon pauvre petit, tu vois que je vieillis beaucoup, me dit-elle; un jour je te laisserai brusquement".
> Elle se tut, très oppressée. Irrésistiblement, alors je m'écriai, ce qu'il semblait qu'elle attendît que je lui dise:
> "Maman..., tu sais que je veux épouser Alissa". Et ma phrase faisait suite sans doute à ses plus intimes pensées. . . . (38)

Equal to everyone's willingness to have Alissa assume the maternal icon is the ignorance of the potentially disastrous consequences. Had Jérôme's maternal image defined a life-celebrating earth mother, he

might have encouraged Alissa to develop the natural harmony suggested in her love for the Normandy countryside; forced through ever-diminishing biblical portals, however, she immures herself increasingly in Puritan walls. The Madonnas of the Dutch school are equally sensuous and soothing, capable of both joy and sadness.[4] Jérôme's antithetical vision, cultivated by Madame Palissier and Miss Ashburton, admits only the Madonna's darker elements: "Je vivais auprès de ces femmes à l'air également doux et triste, et que je ne puis revoir qu'en deuil" (12). Arguably it is Jérôme's dependence on this ambience of sweet sadness that denies his mother the modest movement from a black to a mauve ribbon, by his own admission, well after his father's death:

> "O maman! m'étais-je écrié, comme cette couleur te va mal!"
> Le lendemain elle avait remis un ruban noir. (12)

As Jérôme shifts the maternal burden to Alissa, he places similarly dark demands and limitations on his cousin. He finds the maternal air, "également doux et triste", in a smile characteristic of the countless Virgin icons that have provided succour in the Catholic cultus. Alissa's features have long flown from memory, but Jérôme well recalls the same regard of "mild pity" that so comforts Joyce's Stephen Dedalus when he returns from his nocturnal ramblings (105).

> . . . je ne revois que l'expression presque triste déjà de son sourire et que la ligne de ses sourcils, si extraordinairement relevés au-dessus des yeux, écartés de l'oeil en grand cercle . . . Ils donnaient au regard, à tout l'être, une expression d'interrogation à la fois anxieuse et confiante,--oui, d'interrogation passionnée. Tout, en elle, n'était que question et qu'attente... Je vous dirai comment cette interrogation s'empara de moi, fit ma vie. (22)

> A cause de son sourire enfantin, la gravité de son regard était charmante; je revois ce regard si doucement, si tendement interrogateur se lever et comprends que mon oncle ait, dans son désarroi, cherché près de sa fille aînée soutien, conseil et réconfort. (32)

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[4]See the plates of Joos van Cleve's *Virgin and Child* and Rogier van der Weyden's *St. Luke Painting the Virgin* as examples, (Warner, plates 34 and 44).

Jérôme is about to tell his reader how he responded to Alissa's passionate interrogation by vowing to protect Alissa from the post-Edenic world signalled by Lucile's adultery. His future insensitivity to Alissa, however, suggests that Gide repeats the reference to her look of tender interrogation because Jérôme, like his uncle, has more interest in seeking refuge than he does in providing it.

In Bernanos' *Journal d'un curé de campagne*, the Curé de Torcy struggles to explain Mary's protean ability to be at once mother and daughter, the same ability which allows Alissa to provide both functions for Jérôme and her father. The description, most likely pieced together from the fragments of nearly two centuries of icons, attributes the same childlike gravity, the same sweet and dolorous interrogation to the infant mother found in Jérôme's description of Alissa.

> Le regard de la Vierge est le seul regard vraiment enfantin, le seul vrai regard d'enfant qui se soit jamais levé sur notre honte et notre malheur. . . . Pour la bien prier, il faut sentir sur soi ce regard qui n'est pas tout à fait celui de l'indulgence--car l'indulgence ne va pas sans quelque expérience amère--mais de la tendre compassion, de la surprise douloureuse, d'on ne sait quel sentiment encore, inconcevable, inexprimable, qui la fait plus jeune que le péché, plus jeune que la race dont elle est issue, et bien que Mère par la grâce, Mère des grâces, la cadette du genre humain".[5]

Even the *grâce* emphasized here, at once a spiritual gift and the last attempt to describe Mary's ineffable quality, reminds the reader that the Curé and Jérôme perceive in their Madonnas the same archetype, the same cultural mythology. Jérôme finishes his portrait of Alissa by explaining how the joyful and vibrant "exterior" beauty of Juliette pales next to the "grâce" of her sister (22), an echo of the "plena gratia" epithet used by the archangel Gabriel fashions to describe Mary's spiritual beauty at the Annunciation (Luke I:28). Stephen, the Curé, and Jérôme all coincide in their perception of the Madonna icon because they all belong to the same tradition, one which would empty Mary of her own being to fill her according to the perceiver's needs. Even now that Jérôme has

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[5]George Bernanos, *Journal d'un curé de campagne* (Paris: Plon, 1936, 1974), 230. Ashe uses the excerpt to illustrate what cult members perceive to be Mary's "special", ultimately ineffable "quality" (2).

read Alissa's journals, he fails to see that there may have been something else, a sign of her own human needs, behind his cousin's look of "passionate interrogation".

Darker than Jérôme's need for the "gravity" of Alissa's smile is his obsession with the ambience of mourning, the need to lock the Madonna forever in the Pietà pose. Juliette, according to his rigid antithesis, looks toward "la joie et la santé" (22), while Alissa must direct her eyes to mourning. From the outset he credits his very disposition to love Alissa to the "inky cloak" ambience of *Hamlet* : "Peut-être ma sensibilité, surexcitée par notre deuil et, sinon par mon propre chagrin, du moins par la vue du chagrin de ma mère, me prédisposait-elle à de nouvelles émotions" (14-5). The air surrounding his mother's death heightens further Jérôme's sombre sensitivity: "Mon deuil n'avait pas assombri, mais comme aggravé notre amour" (43-4). Jérôme seems surprised when Alissa takes the admixture of love and death further --"Je pense qu'elle [la mort] peut rapprocher . . . ce qui a été séparé pendant la vie" (47)--and fails to see how even his symbolic suggestions encourage the gravity of her vision. When Christmas festivities of rebirth call for an end to Christian mourning, Alissa's "corsage claire" (Jérôme finds it impossible to imagine his mother "en robe clair" [15]) contends with Jérôme's gift, an amulet that suggests she replace his mother at the foot of the cross.

> Elle portait au cou, dans l'échancrure de son corsage clair, une ancienne petite croix d'améthyste que je lui avais donnée en souvenir de ma mère. (78)

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The mournful Mater Dolorosa encourages, too, another death--that of Jérôme's manhood; for, as Gide suggests, Jérôme fashions Alissa's roles to complement those that serve to elevate him. Just as he later exalts Alissa to transform himself into an "idol" (145), he encourages the Mater Dolorosa to allow for the sickly and lachrymose son: "J'étais de santé délicate. La sollicitude de ma mère et de Miss Ashburton tout occupée à prévenir ma fatigue. . ." (12). Charged already with a father in emotional dotage, Alissa extends her merciful care to embrace another

patient; in fact, when Jérôme temporarily vacates his bed, Alissa proceeds to play nurse to Juliette.

> "Pardonne-moi, mon cher Jérôme, si je ne t'ai pas écrit plus tôt. L'état de notre pauvre Juliette ne m'en a guère laissé le temps. Depuis ton départ je ne l'ai presque pas quittée". (90)

Away from Fongueusemare Jérôme revels in the rigour of military "manoeuvres" and "les exercices obligatoires" (112); on his first day of leave with Alissa, however, he falls prey to a migraine and, on the second, he awakens "courbaturé, grippé" (118).

The delicate emotional response encouraged by Alissa's sad maternal air emasculates Jérôme even more than does his delicate health. Tears lie so near to the surface that they spill even when he admits to feeling little sadness (39). Protective Alissa, who fears the world for Jérôme (64), continually unleashes her lover's floods of self-indulgence. One misconstrued word at the Christmas party suffices to make Jérôme's eyes "s'emplir de larmes" (79); by the time of the romantic pact of the cross, Alissa has apparently witnessed enough effusions to wonder if Jérôme will know how to leave "sans larmes, sans soupirs" (121). He does not; and Gide resorts again to the ironic detachment of melodrama to make Jérôme assume a pose he has already rehearsed with Aunt Félicie. Jérôme the narrator remembers feeling that his heart would break for his rebuffed proposal: "comme un enfant, je laissai rouler mon front sur les genoux de la bonne tante" (74). This time there is no intermediary, so Jérôme simply turns to Alissa, "le front dans ses genoux, pleurant comme un enfant" (129).[6]

Jérôme's various reactions to these profusions of tears point to a conflict among the masks he would like to don simultaneously. The mystic and romantic insist that such outward signs manifest a superior sensibility: Jérôme counters Alissa's mistrust of Pascal's "intonation pathétique" with the position, "C'est ce tremblement, ce sont ces larmes qui font la beauté de cette voix" (139). These postures of male weakness

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[6]Compare Jérôme's reaction here with that of the speaker in Baudelaire's "Chant d'automne" , one of the poems the narrator remembers reciting to Alissa (47): "Ah! laissez-moi, mon front posé sur vos genoux' (*Fleurs du mal*, LVI). Chapter two will discuss further the plagiaristic nature of Jérôme's emotional responses.

and hypersensitivity before the stronger woman have their antecedents in Goethe's Werther and Chateaubriand's René (see chapter IV).[7] But another voice in Jérôme worries that the lachrymose son undermines a need to conform to a popularly constructed code of manhood. In the incident with Aunt Félicie, the sensitive soul--taken by Gide again to the extremes of parody--suddenly feels his heart will break; the 'man' condemns and attempts to rationalize his actions: "Je ne sais ce qui me prit alors; énervé sans doute par cet interrogatoire, il me sembla soudain que mon coeur crevait" (73). And later: "J'étais honteux et désolé de m'être laissé aller à ma faiblesse" (74). Jérôme's judgement that he acted "comme un enfant" with Alissa implies a similar self-condemnation.

Arguably it is the aspiring man who opens the *récit* by explaining, "Je n'avais pas douze ans lorsque je perdis mon père" (11). The phrase is, admittedly, understated and colloquial, but it informs Jérôme's search for his identity as a man by more than simply its position in the text. Unlike the more common phrase that his father 'est mort,' Jérôme's language both emphasizes *his* loss and suggests the critical timing: he was not yet twelve years old, an age often associated with traditional rites of passage.[8] It is as if he wished to insist upon the loss of his male role model to explain the inevitable effeminacy born of his mother's and Miss Ashburton's maternal cosseting. Such an apologia might well provide a second level of meaning for the "ruban" incident, the first indication of strife between mother and son. Along with his insistence that the maternal icon maintain its sweet and sad air, Jérôme's demands might speak to his sense that the ribbon of mourning constitutes his last tangible tie with the paternal. Certainly the "loss" of "my" father serves as a temporal yardstick for the events most critical to both the *récit* and Jérôme's troubled transition to adulthood. "Cette histoire"--that of his new emotions for Alissa--"c'est vraiment l'année de la mort de mon père que je puis dire qu'elle commence" (14). "Oui, c'est bien l'année de la mort de mon père" (15). And when the first intimations of evil in

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[7]See A. Vincent-Buffault, *The History of Tears: Sensibility and Sentimentality in France* (London: Macmillan, 1991).

[8]Albert Sonnenfeld, in an article that reaches different conclusions, finds it important that "Jérôme's tale begins (and this is thrice reiterated) with his father's death at the very moment he himself is entering adolescence. His entire life will be an atonement for his father's death (and its chronological link to his nascent sexuality and thence to Lucile) and an admission of permanent sexual paralysis" ("On Reader and Reading", 186).

Lucile's room threaten his innocence and precipitate his ascension to Alissa's chamber, Jérôme notes, it was "deux ans après la mort de mon père" (23).

Bereaved of father, Jérôme can look only to his uncle as a counterbalance to the surrounding matriarchy. The kindly but feckless Monsieur Bucolin readily accepts the charge--"N'es-tu pas déjà presque mon enfant?" (43)--but is impotent to provide the archetypal male direction. Before Lucile's departure he panics during her "crises", commiserates with Alissa once they have passed; after his wife's escape he withdraws, sequestering himself all day in his study until his oldest daughter cajoles him into taking a walk in the garden. As we have already seen, Jérôme determines that Alissa treats her father "comme un enfant", and he responds by looking to his daughter for maternal "soutien, conseil, et réconfort" (32). Arguably, according to Jérôme's own testimony, Uncle Bucolin seems more a rival for Alissa's maternal devotion than he does a surrogate father. In fact, the spirit of Gide's ironic comparisons between uncle and nephew suggests that M. Bucolin is accurate in all but verb tense when he remarks, "J'étais assez pareil à toi, Jérôme; plus peut-être que je ne le sais" (45).

The vying-sibling comparison looks to one pole, while, to understand the most important affinity between nephew and uncle, the reader needs to look simultaneously to the other: both 'sons' turn to Alissa for reassurance because Lucile finds them deficient. Gide merely needs to suggest the natural incompatibility of the bedazzled banker from Le Havre and the seductive child of Martinique since, as will be discussed further in chapter VIII, the contemporary mythology assumes the Créole will play the Fatal Woman to the timid Puritan. Jérôme furtively glimpses but a single night's hint of the "scandalous" set-piece in Lucile's room--"ma tante est couchée sur une chaise longue; à ses pieds, Robert et Juliette; derrière elle un inconnu jeune homme en uniforme de lieutenant" (24)--yet he and the reader instantly understand that this familiar "jeu de scene" has been played out many nights before.[9] Gide has his narrator construct a three-tiered set to expose the entire cause-

[9]Jérôme has already noted Lucile's recurring "crises" (20). The maid's warning to the heedless Jérôme, then--"Ne montez pas. . . . Madame a une crise" (24)--is both comic and revealing.

and-effect relationship through a set of signature poses: Lucile in her lair, eternally on the chaise-longue; Alissa in her chapel, eternally on her knees; the good uncle in either his room or his office, eternally in feckless agony. The stilted melodramatic poses attest to the simplicity of Jérôme's vision. This sort of spatial irony is one of Gide's favourite tactics for detaching himself from his first-person narrator. As Barthes explains, the mode of presence for visual myth is spatial: "Les éléments de la forme ont donc entre eux des rapports de place, de proximité".[10] Here Jérôme-the-mythmaker carefully reconstructs the interrelationships of place and proximity in his form, the better to fill it with his "signification" (the proximity of the younger children to heighten the "monstrous" nature of Lucile's infidelity, the suggestions of their position at the adulterous mother's feet, the virginal daughter on her knees as if to expiate the sins of the reclining vamp).

While the scene implies that Lucile drives Uncle and nephew to Alissa's room for different reasons, the mind's eye, still entertaining a vision of Jérôme in flight, senses at least a subconscious affinity of motive; and Gide has strengthened the visual intimation with a sort of algebraic suggestion, another technique the author uses to separate himself from Jérôme as narrator throughout the *récit*. Uncle Bucolin, as has been noted, begins by suggesting that a past self is equal to a present Jérôme: "'J'étais assez pareil à toi, Jérôme". Gide proceeds to remove the temporal qualification by having both males act contemporaneously "comme un enfant" with a common maternal figure, Alissa. In telling us that that the young M. Bucolin fell in love with Lucile at first sight ("il s'éprit d'elle" [17]), Gide suggests that Jérôme might be similarly vulnerable to the Lucile he imagines to have been an "enfant si séduisante" (17).

Gide has Jérôme collapse the generational gap between mother and daughter, having him note that his "très belle" aunt Lucile looks less like the mother than she does "la soeur aînée de ses filles" (16).[11] Now the symmetry is complete: uncle and nephew become contemporary rivals for both Alissa's affection and Lucile's romantic

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[10]*Mythologies*, 207.

[11]This serves as well to coalesce Lucile and Alissa,the real soeur aînée to Juliette and Robert, and who assumes, on occasion, with Jérôme "cet air de soeur aînée" (65).

favour. This helps to explain at least one of the reasons Jérôme the reminiscent narrator still keeps "un petit portrait" of the aunt he allegedly despises. Jérôme assumes that his tale of Lucile's attempted seduction--"Elle descend sa main dans ma chemise entrouverte"--will evoke moral outrage; Gide, however, the unobtrusive creator, "refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails",[12] suggests that Jérôme's reaction might be more ambivalent than he recognizes. Gide manipulates the scene, in fact, to provoke more laughter than outrage, conjoining his voice with Lucile's as she cries out to the fleeing Jérôme, "Fi! le grand sot!" (20).

While Jérôme doesn't literally run to Alissa here, he does flee to the little cistern in the "potager", the homely kitchen garden that becomes an ironic symbol of the maternal Alissa. In a muted echo of Michel's abandon in the "South", Alissa celebrates an escape from domestic drudgery that coincides with her twenty-fifth birthday: "Hier, arrivée a Nîmes; mon premier voyage! N'ayant aucun souci du ménage ni de la cuisine . . . je commence un journal" (159). "Près l'escalier du potager" (33), Alissa holds her colloquies with her child-father; "passant devant la petite porte du potager" (147), the idea suddenly seizes Jérôme to see Alissa on his last trip to Fongueusemare; and, as Alissa implies in her journal, Jérôme's impulse responds to her calling out his name each night as she exited by "la petite porte du potager" (173), the same restrictive door where Alissa says to Jérôme her final--and literal--"Adieu!" The narrowness of that gate, along with Jérôme's furious ablutions, suggests that the "potager" symbolizes the restrictive life of the quintessential Madonna, her virginal purity in the rigourous cleansing of the seductress, the maternal in the simple refuge of herbs, soups, and the kitchen hearth.

> Je m'enfuis; je courus jusqu'au fond du jardin; là, dans un petit citerneau du potager, je trempai mon mouchoir, l'appliquai sur mon front, lavai, frottai mes joues, mon cou, tout ce que cette femme avait touché. (20)

The night of the "jeu de scène" Jérôme does ascend to Alissa's refuge on the third floor. Granted, he had come to see Alissa in any case, but once again Gide's textual equations evoke myriad suggestions. Gide's

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[12]Stephen Dedalus's ideal authorial detachment, *Portrait*, 215.

detachment from his narrator relies as heavily on the visual, nearly cinematic, as it does on the linguistic. The shadow in the stairwell and Jérôme's furtiveness direct the reader's eye to pan from the signature light of Lucile's room to the dumbfounded Jerome, and from the signature darkness of Alissa's chamber back to the anxious Jérôme. Gide captures Alissa in an unguarded posture by having Jérôme push open the door.

> Un rai de lumière sort de la chambre [de Lucile] et coupe le palier de l'escalier; par crainte d'être vu, j'hésite un instant, me dissimule, et plein de stupeur, je vois ceci: au milieu de la chambre aux rideaux clos, mais où les bougies de deux candélabres répandent une clarté joyeuse, ma tante est couchée sur une chaise longue. . . .
>
> Je me glisse sans être vu. (24)
>
> Me voici devant la porte d'Alissa . . . . La chambre est déjà si sombre que je ne distingue pas aussitôt Alissa; elle est au chevet de son lit, à genoux, tournant le dos à la croisée d'où tombe un jour mourant. . . . (24-5)

Having just recorded the uncle's ascent to Alissa's room after Lucile's particularly strong crisis (21), the reader's eye begins to coalesce the images of Jérôme and M. Bucolin running fearfully from Lucile's sexuality to Alissa's maternal comfort ("soutien, conseil, et réconfort"). The "crises" refine the parallels even further in their allusion to Lucile's need for climactic relief, whether in the form of her playful "seduction" of Jérôme, her laughter "aux éclats" while Robert and Juliette remain in the room, or her flirtation with the young lieutenant. All three forms intimidate and confuse her 'sons'. During Lucile's crises, the uncle becomes nonplussed ("s'affolait); here the "stupefied" Jérôme admits, "Je ne comprenais que bien imparfaitement la cause de la détresse d'Alissa" (25).

This night, however, Jérôme's eyes accustom themselves to Alissa's darkened room. The vision demands that he rise above his uncle's weakness. Gide relies again on parody to emphasize the complete reversal of roles, one that will trouble Alissa's iconic postures. Deprived of a father's guidance, Jérôme's imagination turns to the chivalric code that recalls the popular romances of Dumas and Scott (see part II). The protective Alissa momentarily sheds the Mater Dolorosa's posture to become the maiden in distress, the coddled son exchanges his "col

marin" for the knight's armour. "Cet instant décida ma vie. . . . Je sentais intensément que cette détresse était beaucoup trop forte pour cette petite âme palpitante, pour ce frêle corps tout secoué de sanglots" (25). Jérôme's impassioned oath and purple prose are consistent with the code's curious confusion of soldierdom, religion, and romantic love.

> Ivre d'amour, de pitié, d'un indistinct mélange d'enthousiasme, d'abnégation, de vertu, j'en appelais à Dieu de toutes mes forces et m'offrais, ne concevant plus d'autre but à ma vie que d'abriter cette enfant contre la peur, contre le mal, contre la vie. Je m'agenouille enfin plein de prière; je la réfugie contre moi. . . . (26)

Any laughter evoked by Gide's parody here is short-lived; any amusement over Alissa's melodramatic assumption of the maiden-martyr role dissipates when she directs that part toward deadly extremes. Concomitant to that tragedy, too, is the confusion signalled by Jérôme's need to don a mask so antithetically opposed to that of the coddled son. He who sought the Madonna's refuge now proposes to provide it for her. The vacillation between two such unlikely antipodes places impossible demands on Alissa, whose maternal habit of consolation undermines Jérôme's growth as the knightly protector of helpless maidens.

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Gide suggests that Alissa inherited the conflict between her roles as protective Madonna and protected Maiden when she accepted the maternal transfer from Mme. Palissier. Jérôme's commendably honest but reductive explanation of his reaction to his mother's death implies a certain filial tension.

> J'aimais profondément ma mère et m'étonnais malgré mes larmes de ne point sentir en moi de tristesse; lorsque je pleurais, c'était en m'apitoyant sur Miss Ashburton, qui voyait son amie, plus jeune qu'elle . . . la précéder ainsi devant Dieu. Mais la secrète pensée que ce deuil allait précipiter vers moi ma cousine dominait immensément mon chagrin. (39)

The larger text of the *récit* and of Jérôme's own testimony both question the profundity of his love for his mother and ask if what first appears to be a boon for his new love eventually proves its destruction. Loring D. Knecht ends her brilliant article on *La Porte étroite* with the charge that, because of his insensitivity to Alissa's needs, "Jérôme kills Alissa just as surely as Michel kills Marceline in *L'Immoraliste*".[13] This chapter would add that both "murders" can be read, too, as cases of unconscious matricide.

The portrait Jérôme fashions in the early pages of his account mixes critical with complimentary shades. The son's ambivalence toward the solicitous nurse in his mother is typical: "La sollicitude de ma mère et de Miss Ashburton, tout occupée à prévenir ma fatigue, si elle n'a pas fait de moi un paresseux, c'est que j'ai vraiment goût au travail" (12). Along with the suggestion that his mother both cares for and encourages his "santé delicate", surfaces another implicit criticism of a potentially negative maternal influence. The Puritan work ethic that seems an antidote for maternal oppression here is exposed at the outset of the next chapter as, paradoxically, a symptom of that oppression. Betrayed by Gide's irony and his own words again, Jérôme condemns where he hopes to praise. Pasteur Vautier's exigent demand to choose always the "straitest gate" appeals to Jérôme.

> Cet enseignement austère trouvait une âme préparée, naturellement disposée au devoir, et que l'exemple de mon père et de ma mère, joint à la discipline puritaine à laquelle ils avaient soumis les premiers élans de mon coeur, achevait d'incliner vers ce que j'entendais appeler: la vertu. (30)

Jérôme's metaphor of his parents' suppression of his heart's first natural impulses suggests the possibility of some muted resentment. Gide's language similarly betrays Jérôme in that forced submission denies the possibility of "natural" disposition; in fact, It is their opposition to the natural that provides the key to the paradoxical relationship between physical delicateness and the psychological rigour of the puritan.

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[13]Loring D. Knecht, "A New Reading of Gide's *La Porte étroite*", *PMLA* 82 (1967):640-48.

In *L'Immoraliste* Michel wrestles with the same tension, articulated in the same language, to arrive at the opposite ethos. Sitting at the feet of Ménalque, he learns to what degree "nature" opposes a "virtue" grounded in constraint: "Je ne prétends à rien qu'au naturel, et, pour chaque action, le plaisir que j'y prends m'est signe qu je devais la faire" (118). And Michel pursues physical robustness with a religious zeal because he has come to understand the inextricable tie between puritan constraint and his former physical delicateness. "Aussi bien n'étais-je plus l'être malingre et studieux à qui ma morale précédente, toute rigide et restrictive, convenait" (61). What he only partially understands, however, is his apparent need to hasten the birth of his "new being" by destroying those who had once suppressed it. The excessive calmness of his studious life had left him, like Jérôme, physically weak--"j'étais d'une santé très délicate" (19); and it was his mother's puritan austerity that had indirectly fuelled his effete academic asceticism.

> Le grave enseignement huguenot de ma mère s'était, avec sa belle image, lentement effacé en mon coeur. . . . Je ne soupçonnais pas encore combien cette première morale d'enfant nous maîtrise, ni quels plis elle laisse à l'esprit. Cette sorte d'austérité dont ma mère m'avait laissé le goût en m'en inculquant les principes, je la reportai toute à l'étude. (17)

As Michel unconsciously transfers to his wife his resentment toward his parents, he resents her coddling the weakest of the Arab children, arguably, because he has begun to suspect that her idea of the maternal thrives on the dependence born of their delicateness.

> "Oui, si peu que ce fût, j'étais gêné par sa présence. Si je m'étais levé, elle m'aurait suivi; si j'avais enlevé mon châle, elle aurait voulu le porter; si je l'avais remis ensuite, elle aurait dit: 'Tu n'as pas froid?'" (41)

It seems clear his growing irritation with Marceline's solicitous nursing is effected by his hazy intuition that these delicate and docile children are the Arab counterpart of the "être malingre et studieux" he hopes to cast off:

> Je la trouvai dans la salle à manger, occupée près d'un enfant très jeune, si malingre et d'aspect si chétif, que j'eus pour lui d'abord plus de dégoût que de pitié" (43).

> Elle amenait ceux de l'école, qu'elle encourageait au travail; à la sortie des classes, les sages et les doux montaient. . . . (51]
>
> Ceux que Marceline choyait étaient faibles, chétifs, et trop sages: je m'irritai contre elle et contre eux et finalement les repoussai. . . . (52)

Yet, even after he has returned to the "north" where his "old self" had been formed, he is ostensibly unaware of his tendency to coalesce Marceline with his mother or of his need to make of Marceline his mother's scapegoat. It is Michel's listeners who must hear in his fascination for Athalaric's "revolt" against his mother and his Latin education Michel's own sublimated desires (76); who must see in a single nostalgic image how Michel has conflated Marceline and his mother: "Nous allions nous asseoir près du bois, sur le banc où jadis j'allais m'asseoir avec ma mère" (83);[14] who must detect behind Michel's redoubled tenderness toward his wife the guilt for having to destroy her before she allows the past to submerge his new "authentic self". "Tout le passé soudain se souleva, comme s'il m'attendait et, me reconnaissant, voulait se refermer sur mon approche" (82).

While Jérôme's rebellion against the maternal remains characteristically "flabby",[15] he surmises to some degree the causal relationship between the delicateness and puritan constraint fostered by his mother and the "natural" abandon of Lucile. His characterisation of Madame Palissier tends increasingly toward caricature as he recounts her antipathy to the seductive Créole, though to what extent Jérôme consciously delineates a stereotype of the narrow Puritan remains unclear. Shortly after he begins to recognise his disposition to "nouvelles

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[14]Sonnenfeld finds here the "one detail" in the *récit* that revives the "Génitrix figure of Gide's autobiography". "At La Morinière, itself an idealized image of the fecundity of the archetypal mother, the pregnant Marceline inspires tender devotion in Michel. . . . The mother resuscitates as the pregnant Marceline on the bench that will become the altar of the love of Alissa and Jérôme" ("On Readers and Reading", 185). My argument does not deny the Oedipal; rather it adds another element to the complexity of Michel's and Jérôme's attitudes toward Marceline and Alissa.

[15]In his *Journal* entry for September & October 1909, Gide explains how Jérôme's flabbiness informs even his style: "le flasque caractère de mon Jérôme impliqu[e] la flasque prose" (276).

émotions", Jérôme stumbles into a room where his mother is conversing with Miss Ashburton.

> Il s'agissait de ma tante; ma mère s'indignait qu'elle n'eût pas pris le deuil ou qu'elle l'eût déjà quitté. (Il m'est, à vrai dire, aussi impossible d'imaginer ma tante Bucolin en noir que ma mère en robe claire.) Ce jour de notre arrivée, autant qu'il m'en souvient, Lucile Bucolin portait un robe de mousseline. Miss Ashburton, conciliante comme toujours, s'efforçait de calmer ma mère; elle arguait craintivement:
>
> "Après tout, le blanc aussi est de deuil.
>
> --Et vous appelez aussi "de deuil" ce châle rouge qu'elle a mis sur ses épaules? Flora, vous me révoltez", s'écriait ma mère. (15)

Both Madame Palissier's concerns for the formalities and suits of mourning and her attendant disregard for the substance of Christian charity suggest hypocrisy. And when Flora's attempts as peacemaker merely precipitate Madame Palissier's indignation toward hysterical cruelty, Jérôme should see that he has stumbled upon the true character of the alleged friendship. Translations threaten distortion of nuance; but whether Flora argues "timidly" or "fearfully", the transition from governess to companion to friend ("l'institutrice de ma mère, puis sa compagne et bientôt son amie" [11]) has stopped short of equal footing. And while "révoltez" comes closer to "annoy" than it does to its English cognate, Jérôme's account supplies another possible reason why his tears fall for the kindly Miss Ashburton and not for his mother.

Most germane to the portrait of Mme. Palissier is the defense of Lucile. Jérôme's vision demands Lucile in white because he associates her with all that joyfully ascends toward life; he sees his mother in black because her cult of "deuil" tends gravely toward death (see chapter II). The homely innocence supplied by Jérôme's memory of Lucile's simple "mousseline" may be as naive an association as Flora's attempt to find purity in the white mourning dress, but such optimism seems more engaging than Mme. Palissier's branding of Lucile as a scarlet woman. Jérôme's attraction to Lucile surpasses either his knowledge or his confession; and while it is understandable how such a sensual woman might provoke in any young Puritan boy a singular malaise--"un sentiment fait de trouble, d'une sorte d'admiration et d'effroi" (18)--Gide

suggests that Jérôme once more confuses instinct and maternal inculcation:

> Peut-être un obscur instinct me prévenait-il contre elle [Lucile]; puis je sentais qu'elle méprisait Flora Ashburton et ma mère, que Miss Ashburton la craignait et que ma mère ne l'aimait pas". (18-9)

Interestingly, Jérôme's three remaining references to his mother in the first chapter all concentrate equally on the tensions between her and Lucile and those between mother and son. After the aunt's particularly strong "crise", Jérôme overhears a voice bent more on self-righteous indignation than on comforting an overwrought brother. "Veux-tu que je te dise, mon ami: tout cela, c'est de la comédie. Et plusieurs fois, séparant les syllabes: de la co-mé-die" (21). The prose snapshot taken after Lucile's scandalous flight recaptures the village-gossip pose with the "interminable chuchoterie" between mother and Aunt Plantier. Here Jérôme notes that Mme. Palissier patronises him with a rebuff that must surely offend the young man who considers himself "précocement mûri" and who has just taken a sacred vow to protect his cousin against all fear: "Mon enfant, va jouer plus loin!" (26)

In the final reference, Jérôme makes it a "point d'honneur" not to question his mother concerning Lucile's escape, leaving ambiguous how much of his knightly code is dictated by a concern for Mme. Palissier, how much by resentment of her refusal to acknowledge his attempted passage to manhood. Jérôme's sacramental vision supports the latter possibility in signalling a decisive rift between adolescents and parents.

> Je devais retrouver mes cousines le lendemain, au temple, et cela seul occupait ma pensée; car mon esprit d'enfant attachait une grande importance à cette sanctification de notre revoir. (27)

Gide widens the narrative angle to better capture the full play of cause and effect-- son moving from mother to lover, Jérôme's mother transferring her maternal compassion to his double, M. Bucolin:

> Alissa se tenait à quelques places devant moi. je voyais de profil son visage; je la regardais fixement, avec un tel oubli de moi qu'il me semblait que j'entendais à travers elle ces

> mots que j'écoutais éperdument. --Mon oncle était assis à côté de ma mère et pleurait. (27)

Jérôme's substitution of one Mater Dolorosa for another achieves nothing. The initiated youth traditionally breaks free from parental oppression, while Jérôme walks out one narrow door only to enter through an even more restrictive portal: "Et cette porte devenait encore la porte même de la chambre d'Alissa" (28). Madame Palissier, Jérôme, and Alissa all agree that her principal task is to continue the maternal "soutien, conseil, et réconfort" (32), maintaining all the while the dark ambience of mourning. Oblivious of Jérôme's ambivalence toward both his mother and Lucile, Alissa assumes Mme. Palissier's opposition by suppressing any possible reappearance of the fallen mother in her. And rather than encouraging Jérôme's forays into life, she reinforces his monkish habit, hoping to preserve him from a world which they both fear and disdain. Jérôme admits,

> Il me plaisait que cette habitude quasi monacale me préservât d'un monde qui, du reste, m'attirait peut et qu'il m'eût suffi qu'Alissa pût craindre pour m'apparaître haïssable aussitôt. (64)

Gide's structural symmetry refuses to provide reductive answers for the questions it provokes. The reader can only note patterns and irregularities and continue to formulate queries. If Jérôme finds the world so unattractive, why does he continue to circumnavigate the globe? Early in the day on which the events "decide" his life, upon learning that his mother would be out with Miss Ashburton for several hours, Jérôme remembers:

> Aussitôt je redescendis en ville, où il était rare que je pusse librement me promener. Je gagnais le port, qu'un brouillard de mer rendait morne; j'errai une heure ou deux sur les quais. Brusquement le désir me saisait d'aller surprendre Alissa que pourtant je venais de quitter. (23)

At Fongueusemare, the family eschews the town altogether; at Le Havre, Jérôme's daily excursions are limited to his runs along the steep shortcut that connects the Plantier home where he stays with the house in which the Bucolin family is tellingly "étroitement logé" (23). In noting the immediacy ("aussitôt") of his departure on that fateful day, and the rarity

with which he could "freely" explore the town, Jérôme unwittingly testifies to both the oppressive order of his life with mother and her obscurantist attitude toward the larger world. For a moment Jérôme seems in step with Joyce's adventurous youths,[16] gaining the port whose access to the sea mocks the narrow portals of maternal rooms. But here the dreary day discourages the would-be sailor who, after a desultory hour or two, runs home to the protective Alissa. Gide recalls again Jérôme's circular movement from one maternal figure to another and, more importantly, charts with this trip the pattern that will characterize his relationship with Alissa throughout the *récit*: the unconscious need for freedom that precipitates the lengthy journeys, the letters bemoaning the separation, the inevitable disillusionment of the reunion.

The pattern echoes one in the twin *récit*, where Michel's increasingly strained assertions of his love for Marceline contend with the contrapuntal admissions of his negligence. Once Michel's thrashing of the Italian driver frees him from the submissive posture of the Pietà, he makes a vow similar in content and motivation to Jérôme's: "Le danger n'avait pas été grand; mais j'avais dû monter ma force, et cela pour la protéger. Il m'avait aussitôt semblé que je pourrais donner ma vie pour elle" (73). Once he has "possessed" Marceline that night, Michel awakens, "tout transi d'amour, de pitié, de tendresse" (74). The Jérôme who usually finds himself a lachrymose Christ at Alissa's knees, assumes the dominant posture for the first time after he witnesses the "jeu de scène" in Lucile's room. Jérôme's possession isn't sexual, but his vow springs from an ecstasy similarly fuelled by pity and the "manly" need to protect. "Drunken" with pity, he stands above the kneeling Alissa and vows to God that he will protect his cousin against all fear (26). Michel eventually breaks his vow, abandoning Marceline in order to prowl the Italian ports. His wandering differs from Jérôme's, as in everything else, in the conscious enjoyment of liberation from maternal constraints.

> Je marchais au hasard, sans but, sans désir, sans contrainte.
> Je regardais tout d'un oeil neuf; j'épiais chaque bruit,

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[16] A motif throughout Joyce's work, perhaps most notably in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Dubliners* . In "An Encounter", the young narrator, having "escaped family and school for a day at the port, remembers: "I, looking at the high masts, saw, or imagined, the geography which had been scantily dosed to me at school gradually taking substance under my eyes. School and home seemed to recede from us and their influences upon us seemed to wane". *Dubliners* (New York: Viking, 1969), 23.

> d'une oreille plus attentive; je humais l'humidité de la nuit; je posais ma main sur des choses; je rôdais. (170)

By this point, Michel had already "abandoned" the expectant Madonna on the cold December night of his son's tragic nativity;[17] he would soon abandon the woman for whom he once could have given his life, on the eve of her death.

The chivalric knight who could conceive no other goal but to shelter Alissa seems even less conscious of why he might have broken his vow. Jérôme seems to ignore his resentment of the Alissa who denies the soldier and serves as refuge for the sobbing "enfant", who warns she is too old for him(57), who "avec cet air de soeur aînée...qu'elle prenait volontiers" chides him for being so childishly romantic (65); the Alissa, in short, who reminds Miss Ashburton of Jérôme's mother. Jérôme claims "je ne trouvais d'autre raison à ma vie que mon amour" (88); yet after the lengthy separation of military service, he allows business concerning his exams to limit their reunion to two days (114). His own analysis concludes that his "abandoning" Alissa to herself led to her "depoétisation" (145), yet he allows three years to slip by unaccountably before, happening to find himself in Le Havre ("me trouvant au Havre"), he makes his last trip to Fongueusemare. Whether or not he was sensitive to Alissa's intimations of her ascetic suicide--"'Non, mon ami, il n'est plus temps" (152)--her pallor and thinness do alarm him. Certainly the Puritan "virtue" that has troubled their relationship from the outset partially impedes the melodramatically masculine solution--"la retenir . . . forcer la porte . . . pénétrer n'importe comment dans la maison" (153); but how much of the knight's inability to act stems from an unconscious desire to free himself from the the mother created by the child and resented by the man? Gide fades from the scene with a telling shot:

> Dès que la porte fut refermée, dès que je l'eus entendue tirer le verrou derrière elle, je tombai contre cette porte, en proie au plus excessif désespoir et restai longtemps pleurant et sanglotant dans la nuit. (153)

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[17]Gide suggests the sad reversal of the Nativity by providing temporal clues. Michel claims he reluctantly "abandon's" Marceline on a snowy winter's night (123), even after the doctor had confined her to bed until her late January delivery date (122). Michel recalls that the Christmas-New Year vacation allowed him to stay with her during the first days after the miscarriage (129).

Only through Alissa's journal does the reader gain the perspective from her side of the narrow door. On one side the lachrymose child collapses in feckless self-indulgence while, as Loring D. Knecht explains, Alissa "wait[s] on the other side of that door, hoping passionately that he would force his way in".[18]

The *Figaro littéraire* published in 1959 an excerpt Gide had suppressed from *La Porte étroite*. Placed at the beginning of Jérôme's last chapter, the Michel-like descent into the world of the senses suggests Jérôme had attempted another form of matricide.

> N'avais-je pas fait d'elle [Alissa] la forme même de ma vertu? C'était contre ma vertu même que, pour m'écarter d'elle, il fallait enfin me tourner. Et je me plongeais alors dans la plus absurde débauche, m'abandonnais jusqu'à l'illusion de supprimer en moi tout valoir.... Puis un affreux sursaut de nouveau m'arrachait à ma léthargie. Je reprenais élan. J'appliquais mon esprit à ruiner en moi ce qui naguére avait été l'édifice de mon bonheur, à dévaster mon amour et ma foi. Je peinais. Dans ce chaos, que pouvait valoir mon travail![19]

The passage supports Alissa's accusation that Jérôme's love for her was entirely intellectual ("un bel entêtement intellectuel" [121]), a self-serving creation of an ideal. Jérôme admits in fact that he has reduced Alissa to allegory,[20] so that in attempting to destroy the "virtue" she represents he is attempting to destroy her. In the edited *récit*, Gide allows Jérôme's abandonment, as he does with Michel, to effect the destruction on it own.

The allusion in the removed excerpt to Michel's "abandon" and "débauche" suggests that both Michel and Jérôme had reduced their lovers to allegory, the narrowest form of literary construct; that without

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[18]Knecht, 646.

[19]*Le Figaro littéraire*, ed. Pierre Mazars, 21 Feb. 1959. Cited by Sonnenfeld, 186, who provides the excerpt's publishing history. "This passage formed the first paragraph of chapter VIII in the proofs of the NRF; Gide removed it at the last minute". The passage appears as an appendix in the Folio edition, 185-86.

[20]Elaine Davis Cancalon, in *Techniques et personnages dans les récits d'André Gide, Archives des lettres modernes*, 117 (9) 1970: 72, makes a similar accusation of Jérôme the narrator: "Quant au portrait d'Alissa, Jérôme le fait d'une façon assez vague pour que sa beauté garde une allure angélique. Pour Jérôme, Alissa n'est pas une femme réelle mais le symbole de la parfaite vertu vers laquelle il s'efforce".

Alissa's journal, she would have been, like Marceline, no more than a series of words and postures, all opposite numbers of other allegorical constructs. Needing only surrogate mothers, both narrators initially ignore their loves' physical attractiveness and concentrate instead on the safer litany of maternal and spiritual beauty: "Marceline était très jolie . . . . Je me reprochai de ne m'en être pas d'abord aperçu" (20). "Qu'Alissa Bucolin fût jolie, c'est ce dont je ne savais m'apercevoir encore" (21). They choose to notice rather "grâce", "charme", "douceur", the qualities of an interior beauty that will not, as does Lucile's sensual beauty, trouble further their own sexual insecurity. When they choose to indulge themselves in the "santé delicate" first fostered by their parents, Michel and Jérôme see only the positive characteristics of the protective Madonna: "tendresse", "soutien", "réconfort", "soin", "confiance"; when they fear that this delicateness impedes their development, they imply these qualities are an insidious form of emasculation, as Georges Vidal puts it, "la tendresse sous laquelle Marceline menaçait de l'étouffer [Michel]".[21]

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B. The Virgin-Mother

The need to have Christ issue from an unflawed vessel created an impossible task for the countless Christian girls who have looked to Mary as a model: "Having in your blessed womb the joys of a mother together with the dignity of virginity, neither was your like seen before, nor do you have a follower: you, without a model, were the only woman to please Christ".[22] Condemned at the outset to failure, her adepts seem destined for frustration and guilt. In her ascension to the Christian pantheon as God-bearer, Mary sanctifies maternity as woman's highest role; having ascended as ever-virgin, she, ironically, depreciates the natural means to maternity. Her followers are bound, according to

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[21]George G. Vidal, "De *L'Immoraliste* à *La Porte étroite* : étude pour les masques de Gide", *André Gide 7*, ed. Claude Martin (Paris: Minard, Lettres Modernes, 1984), 98.

[22]Clayton, 185, cites Caelius Sedulius's *Carmen Paschale*, ed. Huemmer, 48-49: lines 66-69.

Warner's metaphor, "on a double wheel, to be pulled one way and then the other, like Catherine of Alexandria during her martyrdom".[23]

It is the Church's opposition to the natural coexistence of body and soul that Gide criticizes in both *récits,* an opposition which troubled him from his youth. Gide's memoirs accuse the Church of making a "monster" of the flesh, of prescribing adherence to an unnatural moral code that eventually created a profound disturbance in his very being.[24] And no one feared man's natural sexuality more than St. Jérôme and St. Paul who, in giving their names to Gide's and Lawrence's protagonists, provide a humorous hint that Alissa and Miriam are not entirely to blame for their obsessive renunciation. St. Paul clearly implies his preference for the virgin who "careth for the things of the Lord" over the wife who "careth for the things of the world" (Corinthians 7:34); and Jérôme reasons, "To show that virginity is natural while wedlock only follows guilt, what is born of wedlock is virgin flesh".[25] These and the other fathers of the Church transform a virgin birth that finds its mythological necessity as a common sign of a god's origin[26] into their most compelling argument for the ascetic life. Warner explains:

> It is characteristic of Christianity in particular . . . that the restraint of the lower "animal" passions was a further necessary sign of man's superiority to the beast. And it was this shift, from virgin birth to virginity, from a religious sign to a moral doctrine, that transformed a mother goddess like the Virgin Mary into an effective instrument of asceticism and female subjection. . . .
>
> That the mother of God should be a virgin was a matter of such importance to the men of the early Church that it overrode all other considerations, including revelation itself. . . . Sexuality represented to them the gravest danger and the fatal flaw; they viewed virginity as its opposite and its conqueror, sadly failing to appreciate

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[23]Warner, 336.

[24]*Si le grain* , 246, 285.

[25]Cited by Warner, 73, from *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church,* ed. and trans. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 14 vols. Oxford, 1890-1900, 6:29.

[26]Michael P. Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1986), 6. "The motif of the virgin who is impregnated by a god and who gives birth to a hero was part of a great many myths and legends in the pre-Christian Greco-Roman world, as well". See also Ashe, Chapter I and Warner, Chapter III.

> that renunciation does not banish or overcome desire. It is almost impossible to overestimate the effects that the characteristic Christian association of sex and sin and death has had on the attitudes of our civilization.[27]

It seems clear that the effects of the desire neglected by both Jérômes and the attendant pernicious triangle of sex, sin, and death eventually push Alissa toward her ascetic self-immolation. Gide implies throughout that Alissa is prepared to exchange the part of the Mater Dolorosa for a more salutary maternal role, but that Jérôme remains insensitive to her suggestions. When she writes to Jérôme from Nîmes that the happiness of an expectant Juliette fails to fulfil her, she seems to ignore that the sensuous "South" cries out for her own fertility.

> dans mes promenades solitaire sur la "garrigue" . . . ce qui m'étonne le plus c'est de ne pas me sentir plus joyeuse; le bonheur de Juliette devrait me combler... pourquoi mon coeur cède-t-il à une mélancolie incompréhensible, dont je ne me parviens pas à me défendre? La beauté même de ce pays, que je sens, que je constate du moins, ajoute encore à mon inexplicable tristesse... (109)

It is her "solitariness' that accounts for her unhappiness. Even the "Christian" nature of Fongueusemare encourages one moonlit night what must be a passionate longing for her errant lover: "Et tout à coup je t'ai souhaité là, senti là, près de moi, avec une violence telle que tu l'auras peut-être senti" (100).

A journal entry written upon her return to Fongueusemare implies that Alissa had heard clearly Juliette's and nature's call to fertility, their reproach to her solitary waiting. With the self-acknowledged sophistry that characterizes much of the troubled diary, Alissa attempts to dismiss Juliette's maternal joy as a "félicité si pratique, si facilement obtenue, si parfaitement 'sur mesure' qu'il semble qu'elle enserre l'âme et l'étouffe" (162). Gide allows even the language to betray her, having Alissa ironically assign the repressive vocabulary of puritan constraint--"enserrer" and "l'étouffer"--to her sister's natural expansiveness. And, facile or not, her sister's common happiness seems

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[27]Warner, 49- 50.

the one coveted by Alissa in her subsequent letter to Jérôme. Insensitive to the subtle call for fatherhood, he simply notes:

> La lettre suivante ne parlait que de la naissance de sa nièce, dont elle devait être marraine, de la joie de Juliette . . . mais de ses sentiments à elle [Alissa], il n'était plus question. (110)

The next letter is less guarded. The sublimated maternity of godmother seems to satisfy little the Alissa who has spent so many hours "penchée sur ce berceau plein d'espérance".

> "C'est ma petite filleule surtout que je regrette; quand je la reverrai. . . je ne reconnaîtrai plus tous ses gestes; elle n'en avait encore presque pas un que je ne lui eusse vu inventer". (110)

Gide repeats the godmother irony later to underline Alissa's tragic separation of body and soul, a conundrum encouraged both by the impossible model of the Virgin Mary *and* by Jérôme. When Jérôme fails to respond to her thinly-disguised pleas for an easily-obtained human happiness, Alissa increasingly sublimates her maternal desire in the Madonna's role of "spiritual maternity", guiding her children to the supernatural life, the biblical "Vie" for which human existence serves merely as metaphor. It is the spiritual Madonna who worries about the "formation" of her goddaughter's soul: "Par quel égoïsme, quelle suffisance, quelle inappétence du mieux, le développement s'arrête-t-il si vite, et toute créature se fixe-t-elle encore si distante de Dieu?" (110); the spiritual Madonna to whom Jérôme insists, when contemplating his own distance from God, "C'est toi qui me montres la route" (36); the spiritual Madonna, acting as Mediatrix who, in a dream, arranges to have Jérôme simply be absent when she fears he has died--"J'obtenais que simplement tu sois absent" (46); and it is the spiritual Madonna who informs the religious agony recorded in the last notebook of Alissa's journal.

Jérôme, who plans to write the history of religious philosophy (68) and who recites with Alissa long passages from the Vulgate Bible, unwittingly provides another twist to both the *récit's* eponymous allusive play and Alissa's confused maternity. Transported to dream by

Pasteur Vautier's sermon, Jérôme passes along the spacious road to Lucile's room and the spiritual death symbolized by its "odieuse exagération du péché" (28) to the narrower new life promised by the portals of Alissa's chambre. Ignorant of Gide's sexual innuendo, Jérôme explains:

> Je voyais cette porte étroite par laquelle il fallait s'efforcer d'entrer. Je me la représentais, dans le rêve où je plongeais, comme une sorte de laminoir, où je m'introduisais avec effort, avec une douleur extraordinaire où se mêlait pourtant un avant-goût de la félicité du ciel. Et cette porte devenait encore la porte même de la chambre d'Alissa; pour entrer je me réduisais, me vidais de tout ce qui subsistait en moi d'égoïsme...*Car étroite est la voie qui conduit à la Vie,* continuait le pasteur Vautier--et par-delà toute macération, toute tristesse, j'imaginais, je pressentais une autre joie, pure mystique, séraphique et dont mon âme déjà s'assoiffait. Je l'imaginais, cette joie, comme un chant de violon à la fois strident et tendre, comme une flamme aiguë où le coeur d'Alissa et le mien s'épuisaient. (28-29)

It seems unnecessary to note that the young André Gide found unusually sweet shrill sounds to be sexually exciting[28] in order for the reader to know the desire described here is not entirely seraphic. More to the point is that Gide has Jérôme describe his masochistic sexual desires in Marian language and symbols. Just as Jérôme had "plunged" into his studies (69) and, in the suppressed excerpt, "plunged" into his debauch to take his mind off of Alissa, he plunges here into a dream and through the door of Alissa's womb. Jérôme's passage as Alissa's Christ allows him to be alternately Mary's son and husband. "I have been made the gate of heaven; I have been made the door of the son of God . . . . The Lord alone will enter and will go out through it and it will be closed eternally".[29]

This old English Lyric is taken from the Old Testament prophecy most often used to defend the Virgin Birth.[30] Compare the French translation of St. Jerome's Vulgate edition of the Bible (from which

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[28]*Si le grain,* 60.

[29]See footnote 1.

[30]*The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1976), 694.

Jérôme and Alissa have memorised long passages [37][31]) to Jérôme's vision of Alissa's "porte" as the gateway to the chamber that leads to eternal life. The prophet Ezekiel hears in his vision: L'Eternel me dit: Cette porte sera fermée, et ne sera point ouverte; personne n'entrera par elle, parce que l'Eternel, le Dieu d'Israel, est entré par elle; elle demeura fermée" (Ez. 44:1-2). As early as 390, the Church's patristic interpretation asks: "Now, who is that gate of the temple . . . which remains closed? . . . Is not Mary this portal through which the Redeemer entered into this world?"[32]

Warner explains how the "the same intact maidenhead . . . concealed behind the words of the Lord to Ezekiel" was prefigured as well "in the sensual praises of Song of Songs: 'A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed' (Song of Solomon 4:12)".[33] Warner explains, too, how the Church adopted the sensual Song of the nubile Shulamite for Mary's cult of virginal asceticism.

> Because Yahweh and then Christ appear as bridegrooms, and because the Virgin was identified with the Church, the bride of Christ, it was possible for the rabbinical fathers to read the passionate poetry of the Song of Songs as an allegory of God's love, and for later Christian exegetes to identify the lover of the of the Song with Christ and his beloved with the Church, each Christian soul, and the Virgin Mary.[34]

The sealed fountain is that of Alissa's kitchen garden, (le "petit citerneau du potager"), and as Thomas Cordle notes, "the walled garden of the Bucolin house . . . is a symbol of the maternal body".[35] In the Vautier-inspired dream, Jérôme forces Alissa's door, but at their last meeting he,

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[31] In the 24 July journal entry, Alissa admits to some further pretentious struggling with Latin. Interestingly, as Alissa begins to shed the affectations of Jérôme's "belle écriture", she seems to be rebelling against the restrictive nature of "classical" culture, just as Michel does in *L'Immoraliste*: "Repris *l'Imitation*; et non point même dans le texte latin, que je suis trop vaine de comprendre" (*Porte*, 168). "La figure du jeune roi Athalaric était ce qui m'y attirait le plus. J'imaginais cet enfant de quinze ans, sourdement excité par les Goths, se révolter contre sa mère Amalasonthe, regimber contre son éducation latine, rejeter la culture comme un cheval entier fait un harnais gênant. . . (*L'Immoraliste*, 76).

[32] Cited in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 694.

[33] Warner, 62.

[34] Warner, 125

[35] Thomas Cordle, *André Gide* (Boston: Twayne, 1964), 100.

characteristically, fails to translate the intellectual urge into physical action. In Shulamite's suggestive dream, her lover responds to her desires: "I am come into my garden my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey" (Song 5:1); Jérôme, as we have seen, collapses fecklessly against Alissa's door: "Mais la retenir, mais forcer la porte, mais pénétrer n'importe comment dans la maison, qui pourtant ne m'eût pas été fermée . . .non, cela ne m'était pas possible" (153). And indeed, Alissa would not have shut the door to him. In the Song of Songs allusion, Shulamite's closed garden suddenly becomes her closed room, the alternate symbols of the virginal womb in both works. Compare the despair of Shulamite who awakens to find her lover gone with that of the similarly abandoned Alissa.

> Mon Bien-aimé a passé la main par le trou de la porte; et du coup mes entrailles ont frémi. Je me suis levée pour ouvrir à mon Bien-aimé, et de mes mains a dégoutté la myrrhe, de mes doigts la myrrhe vierge, sur la poignée du verrou.
>
> J'ai ouvert à mon Bien-aimé, mais tournant le dos, il avait disparu! Sa fuite m'a fait rendre l'âme. Je l'ai cherché mais ne l'ai point trouvé, je l'ai appelé, mais il n'a pas répondu! (Cantiques 5:4-6)

After Jérôme fails to force the garden door, the tone and content of Alissa's lament recall that of Shulamite. Here the bridegroom is shadow rather than dream, but both virgins respond sensually to their apparitions, both open the suggestive door, both search in the night, both call out desperately.

> Tout s'est éteint. Hélas! il s'est échappé d'entre mes bras, comme une ombre. Il était là! Je le sens encore. Je l'appelle. Mes mains, mes lèvres le cherchent en vain dans la nuit...
>
> Je ne puis ni prier, ni dormir. Je suis ressortie dans le jardin sombre. Dans ma chambre, dans toute la maison, j'avais peur; ma détresse m'a ramenée jusqu'à la porte derrière laquelle je l'avais laissé; j'ai rouvert cette porte avec une folle espérance; s'il était revenu! J'ai appelé. J'ai tâtonné dans les ténèbres. . . . (174)

Shulamite awakens to find her lover *has* "gone down into his garden". Alissa, seeing that Jérôme has indeed escaped from between her arms, flees the house and garden that encourage "intolerably" her love.

Gide suggests through image and allusion that Alissa's "chambre" holds much the same promise as that of Shulamite. Jérôme protects his imaginative creations by denying the perception of anything that might trouble them. Just as he refuses to understand that Juliette loves him--"Je me refusais à comprendre" (82)--he blinds himself to any image inconsistent with his need to make Alissa's room a virginal sanctuary. On the evening he "abandons" his arm around Juliette, Jérôme throws open Alissa's door (the second time Gide has used Jérôme's insensitivity to capture an iconic posture) upon an image that recalls more the seductive Créole than it does the pious daughter--"elle mettait un collier de corail et pour l'attacher levait les bras et se penchait, tournant le dos à la porte et regardant par-dessus son épaule, dans un miroir entre deux flambeaux allumés" (53). But this glimpse of the woman hoping to compete with her attractive younger sister has flown from memory in Jérôme's final summing up of the room that affords him a foretaste of the celestial. At his penultimate visit, Jérôme explains,

> Je n'entrais jamais sans émotion dans cette chambre; je ne sais de quoi s'y formait une sorte de paix mélodieuse où je reconnaissais Alissa. L'ombre bleue des rideaux aux fenêtres et autour du lit, les meubles de luisant acajou, l'ordre, la netteté, le silence, tout racontait à mon coeur sa pureté et sa pensive grâce. (137)

This Marian-like icon of azure serenity and pensive grace is "formed" in Jérôme's incorrigible platonic imagination. Gide's esoteric theological sally identifies the Jérôme who hopes to write the definitive history of religion as being at one with his namesake, the St. Jerome who "saw the virgin birth as the supreme seal of approval on the celibate life",[36] the Doctor of the Church for whom, as Warner puts it, "woman

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[36]Warner, 54-55, supports her inference by citing from Jérôme's 22nd letter:"Now that a virgin is conceived in the womb and borne to us a child... now the chain of the curse is broken. Death came through Eve, but life has come through Mary. And thus the gift of virginity has been bestowed most richly upon women, seeing that it has had its beginning from a woman". *Post Nicene Fathers*, 6:30.

was womb and womb was evil".[37] But the allusion that seems to confirm that Jérôme is more to blame than Alissa for the separation of body and spirit comes once again from Baudelaire's *Fleurs du mal.* "L'invitation au voyage" precedes by two poems the "Chant d'automne" Jérôme recites to Alissa. The speaker invites his child, his sister ("mon enfant, ma soeur"[38]) to dream of a place they could live together, a place that resembles her ("au pays qui te ressemble!")--and Jérôme's description of Alissa's room.

> Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
> Luxe, calme et volupté.
>
> Des meubles luisants,
> Polis par les ans,
> Décoreraient notre chambre;
> Les plus rares fleurs
> Mêlant leur odeurs
> Aux vagues senteurs de l'ambre,
> Les riches plafonds,
> Les miroirs profonds,
> La splendeur orientale,
> Tout y parlerait
> A l'âme en secret
> Sa douce langue natale.
>
> Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
> Luxe, calme et volupté. . . .[39]

As is true throughout the *récit*, even in Gide's allusions the "indicible" is as telling as the said. Gide has Jérôme recall the peaceful mood, the secret

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[37]Warner, 57. "When Augustine, Ambrose, and Jerome endorsed virginity for its special holiness, they were the heirs and representatives of much current thought in the Roman empire of their day. And in this battle between the flesh and the spirit the female sex was placed firmly on the side of the flesh. For as childbirth was woman's special function, and its pangs the special penalty decreed by God after the Fall, and as the child she bore in her womb was stained by sin from the moment of its conception, the evils of sex were particularly associated with the female".

[38]Alissa, as she increasingly needs to sublimate her sexuality, refers frequently to Jérôme as "mon frère". "O mon frère! je ne suis vraiment moi, plus que moi, qu'avec toi" (108).

[39]*Fleurs*, LIII. Russell S. King, "Gide's *La Porte étroite*: Unclosed Gaps and Competing Discourses", *Nottingham French Studies* 31.1 (Spring 1992):47, who notes "Alissa's bedroom is described not as a place of potential eroticism, but as a place of purity and 'grace'", also identifies the description with "language reminiscent of Baudelaire's 'L'Invitation au Voyage", but doesn't bother to explore the allusion. See also Sonnenfeld, "Baudelaire et Gide: *La porte étroite*",*La Table ronde* 232 (1967): 79-90.

silence, the order, even the comforting brilliance of the furniture; what he refuses to remember are the exotic perfumes, the oriental splendour, and, particularly, the luxury and voluptuousness, all language in the litany of Lucile, the seductive Créole (see chapter VII).

Denied her sexuality, left alone behind her door, Alissa will have to settle for the passionate kiss of the Holy Spirit. Before Jérôme's last visit, Alissa had limited her reading to the Bible and *The Imitation of the Life of Christ*. Five days before his arrival, a night passed in prayer and meditation produces this epiphany.

> Soudain il m'a semblé que m'entourait, que descendait en moi une sorte de paix lumineuse, pareille à l'imagination qu'enfant je me faisais du Saint-Esprit. . . . J'ai maintenant la certitude qu'il viendra. (173)

The Holy Ghost that first surrounds and then descends into Alissa recalls the Paraclete at the Annunciation, the divine entry into the Virgin's "gate" to make possible the divine issue from the same portal that the Church hears in Ezekiel's prophecy. Compare Alissa's vision with Gabriel's explanation to the mystified Mary:

> Le Saint-Esprit surviendra en toi, et la vertu du Très-Haut te couvrira de son ombre; c'est pourquoi aussi le saint *enfant* qui naîtra de toi sera appelé le Fils de Dieu. (Luc 1:35)

Alissa's conflation of Jérôme and the Holy Spirit informs her elevation of her cousin to deity and the complex resolution of her struggle between body and soul. Her parody of the Virgin Birth allows Alissa both a religiously condoned consummation with her lover and the opportunity to become the deified Jérôme's mother.

On the eve of Jérôme's final visit, Alissa complements her mystical vision with another maternal scheme, one that would allow her to be simultaneously spiritual wife and daughter to Jérôme. "Il y a longtemps déjà je faisais ce rêve: lui marié; moi marraine de sa première fille, une petite Alissa. . . ." (173) In a final irony, Gide allows Alissa half her wish: she is denied the union with Jérôme, but "petite Alissa" waits

this very moment in Juliette's womb, the fruitful source that has long mocked Alissa's sterility.

Unaided by miraculous intervention, Alissa is refused a platonic resolution to the paradox of the Virgin-Mother. For the union of Christ and Mary, as Warner concludes, "was consummated in heaven, and was thus a love deferred; furthermore, the metaphor of love, the imagery of the Song of Songs remained a mere metaphor and inaccurate at that, for the love deferred was also love denied".[40] As early as the first summer of their love, Alissa attests to her schooling in the tradition of earthly renunciation: "Je pense qu'elle [la mort] peut rapprocher . . . ce qui a été séparé pendant la vie" (47). In juxtaposing the fruit of Juliette's womb with the sterility of Alissa's death, a vision that appropriately chills Alissa in both flesh and soul-- "de la chair et de l'ame" (177)--Gide condemns any resolution to the conflict of body and soul that would suppresses the "authentic self" or too quickly shuffle off the mortal coil. Having denied Alissa the promise of her Annunciation, Gide now undermines her joy of a Christian death. One eye beholds the calming vision of Catholic legend, Jesus ordering that his mother's body "be raised up above the choirs of angels into the kingdom of heaven",[41] while the other looks to the abandoned Alissa.

> C'était comme *l'éclaircissement* brusque et désenchanté de ma vie. Il me semblait que je voyais pour la première fois les murs atrocement nus de ma chambre. J'ai pris peur. . . . O Seigneur! puissé-je atteindre jusqu'au bout sans blasphème.
>
> J'ai pu me lever encore. Je me suis mises à genoux comme un enfant...
>
> Je voudrais mourir à présent, vite, avant d'avoir compris de nouveau que je suis seule. (177-8)

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[40]Warner, 133.

[41]Clayton, 10, cites the manuscript of Transitus C of the apocryphal accounts of Mary's death, quoted in H. Barré's *Les homméliaires carolingiens de l'école d'Auxerre*, Studi e Testi 225 (Rome, 1962), 22.

Chapter Two: Miriam as Madonna

"*The Virgin Mother*" [1]

My little love, my darling,
You were a doorway to me;
You let me out of the confines
Into this strange countrie
Where people are crowded like thistles,
Yet are shapely and comely to see.

My little love, my dearest,
Twice you have issued me,
Once from your womb, sweet mother,
Once from your soul, to be
Free of all hearts, my darling,
Of each heart's entrance fee . . . .

I kiss you good-bye, my dearest,
It is finished between us here.
Oh, if I were as calm as you are,
Sweet and still on your bier!
Oh God, if I had not to leave you
Alone, my dear!

Is the last word now uttered?
Is the farewell said?
Spare me the strength to leave you
Now you are dead.
I must go, but my soul lies helpless
Beside your bed.

--Lawrence's Collected Poems

As Miriam sang her mouth seemed hopeless. She sang like a nun singing to heaven. It reminded him so much of the mouth and eyes of one who sings beside a Botticelli Madonna, so spiritual.

-- "The Test on Miriam"

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[1] D.H. Lawrence, *The Complete Poems*, eds. Vivian de Sola Pinto & Warren Roberts (New York:Viking, 1965), I:101-2.

1. The "Humble Handmaiden"

In James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus suggests that Jesus himself might have authored a portion of his mother's sorrows. Stephen, whose own mother has played the Mater Dolorosa to his Christ of art, remarks to Cranly:

> --Jesus, too, seems to have treated his mother with scant courtesy in public but Suarez, a jesuit theologian and Spanish gentleman, has apologised for him.
> --Did the idea ever occur to you, Cranly asked, that Jesus was not what he pretended to be? (242)

Stephen's reference to the famous author of "The Dignity and the Virginity of the Mother of God"[2] suggests the difficulties many Christians have had in interpreting what might be taken for Christ's insensitivity towards Mary. In the handful of stories in which she appears, her son pierces her soul more than once. When the twelve-year-old Jesus stays behind in Jerusalem to talk with the high priests, the understandably worried Mary asks, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing". The response seems to ignore entirely the grief of a mother who has worried about a lost child during four days: "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:48-49). Mary "understood not". Difficult to understand, too, is the son's equally famous reply to Mary's compassionate request at Cana: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come" (John 2:4). And once his hour does come, Jesus seems consciously to increase the distance between mother and son. In a telling twin to the Jerusalem incident, Jesus seems perturbed when his mother wishes to address him while he is speaking to the people, Scribes, and Pharisees. Clearly Mary is not to bother him while he is "about" an essentially patriarchal ministry. Apprised of her request, Jesus replies with metaphorical sharpness: "Who is my mother? . . . And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mark 3:32-5). Finally, in his ironic rejoinder to a homely version of Elizabeth's

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[2]Francis Suarez, S.J., *The Mysteries of the Life of Christ*, trans. Richard O'Brien (South Bend, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1954).

inspired salutation, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb" (Luke 1:42), Jesus seems to belittle Mary's importance in the plan of redemption. During his ministry, a certain woman of the company called out, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:27-28). Suarez and other theologians can "apologise" for Jesus, but the Christian who understands the maternal relationship with Christ in human terms may still have trouble reconciling these glimpses with the Church's image of the perfect son.

To the Virgin Madonna already pulled between renunciation and desire, the impatient, sometimes ironic son calls for patience, yieldingness, a withdrawal bordering on self-effacement.[3] The mood is that of the fragile accord, the acquiescent Ophelia attempting to placate a volatile Hamlet, the cowed adept straining to please a mercurial messiah. The iconic postures descend inexorably toward the horizontal of submission, from "bowing", to "kneeling", to "crouching". This is the Botticelli Virgin who kneels before the child she has brought to life, The Mary who, as Simone de Beauvoir writes, "freely accepts her inferiority. This is the supreme masculine victory, consummated in the cult of the Virgin--it is the rehabilitation of woman through the accomplishment of her defeat".[4]

Harry Moore records that "The Virgin Mother" was one of the three poems Lawrence gave to Jessie Chambers on the day before his mother's funeral. "Lawrence's mother dominated him even in death",[5] Moore concludes. Or, as Paul's Botticelli allusion suggests, Gertrude's ascendency extends even to the icon: Miriam remains but an adept in the cult of Gertrude the Virgin Mother. Lawrence names her Miriam, the Old Testament namesake and prototype of the Virgin

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[3]Marina Warner believes "the Virgin Mary is a manifestation of the principle the Chinese call *yin* and represents the quintessence of many qualities that east and west have traditionally regarded as feminine: yieldingness, softness, gentleness, receptiveness, mercifulness, tolerance, withdrawal" (Warner, xxiv).

[4]Cited by Warner, 183. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York, 1970), 160.

[5]Harry T.Moore, *The Priest of Love: A Life of D.H. Lawrence*, revised ed. (London: Heinemann, 1982), 126.

Mary,[6] though Paul treats her more like the other Mary, who humbly knelt at Christ's feet.[7] Miriam willingly "bows", "crouches", "kneels" "like a devotee" (224) before Paul, because she sees in him the teacher who could give her the "learning whereon to pride herself" (174). Sadly, Paul's new Word only reinforces her humility. Miriam, even more than Alissa, is the humble "handmaiden" who, after she has nurtured her Christ, served as his muse, submits to his abuse once he is about his mother's business. Anxious about his own virginity, Paul only pretends to teach Miriam out of hers. With language and the artist's impersonal gaze the confused son fashions Miriam into a Virgin-Madonna icon to fulfil certain needs, then breaks and discards her to satisfy others.

The confusion begins with Paul's attitude toward Gertrude, his first Virgin-Madonna. Seeing himself as one of "the sons of mothers whose husbands had blundered rather brutally through their feminine sanctities" (323), Paul would like to conclude with the speaker of the poem that Morel had never violated Gertrude's virgin maidenhood, that Paul was, indeed, a son of God. But to free her from sterility, the Paul who celebrates his "baptism of passion" with Clara concedes that his mother "got real joy and satisfaction out of my my father at first", the "real flame of feeling" "that was necessary for her for her living and developing" (362). For the young Paul who had "denied the God" (88) in his father, who needed, as did Jérôme, to issue through the virgin "doorway", the narrator provides an Annunciation that allows Gertrude's son to have it both ways. Thrust brutally out of Morel's house, Gertrude finds herself surrounded by the moonlight Lawrence uses to recall the light of the Holy Ghost which descended into Mary. "The moon was high and magnificent in the August night. Mrs Morel, seared with passion, shivered to find herself out in a great white light, that fell cold upon her, and gave a shock to her inflamed soul". As she gives herself over to the night, the great light of the moon eventually ousts the "red-hot brand" of hatred for Morel.

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[6]Miriam is the Hebrew source of Mary. She helps bring her brother Moses, the "saviour" of the Israelites, into the world when she rescues him from the river, itself a symbol of rebirth.

[7]Luke 7: 39 identifies Mary Magdalene as the woman who washed Christ's feet, while John 11:2 ascribes the act of humility to Mary of Bethany, Lazarus's sister. Popular Christian "mythology" usually gives the nod to the former.

> She hurried out of the side garden to the front, where she could stand as if in an immense gulf of white light, the moon streaming high in face of her, the moonlight standing up from the hills in front, and filling the valleys where the Bottoms crouched almost, blindingly. . . .
>
> She became aware of something about her. With an effort, she roused herself, to see what it was that penetrated her consciousness. The tall white lilies were reeling in the moonlight, and the air was charged with their perfume, as with a presence. Mrs Morel gasped slightly in fear. She touched the big, pallid flowers on their petals, then shivered. They seemed to be stretching in the moonlight. She put her hand into one white bin: the gold scarcely showed on her fingers by moonlight. She bent down to look at the binful of yellow pollen: but it only appeared dusky. Then she drank a deep draught of the scent. It almost made her dizzy. . . .
>
> Mrs Morel leaned on the garden gate, looking out, and she lost herself awhile. She did not know what she thought. Except for a slight feeling of sickness, and her consciousness in the child, her self melted out like scent into the shiny, pale air. After a time the child too melted with her in the mixing-pot of moonlight, and she rested with the hills and lilies and houses, all swum together in a kind of swoon. (34)

Alastair Niven sees in the "formalism of scene" "the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary as it appears in a number of Renaissance paintings, in which Gabriel carries a lily as he brings the news to Mary of the child with her".[8] But to account for Gertrude's passion, it is important to recognize, too, that Lawrence has infused the "iconography of Botticelli or Raphael" with the sensuality of Pre-Renaissance Christianity, before the Church's need to abstract the "God-idea" led to what Lawrence sees as the current "asexuality"[9] epitomised by the "Virgin Worship".[10] Niven finds here only a "Madonna-like grace", while Carol Sklenicka interprets this natural impregnation as the creation of "a family romance that replaces Paul's actual father with a kind of natural parthenogenesis".[11]

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[8]Alastair Niven, *D.H. Lawrence: The Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 39.

[9]D.H. Lawrence, *"Study of Thomas Hardy" and Other Essays*, ed. Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 70.

[10]"Study of Thomas Hardy", 95.

[11]Carol Sklenicka, *D.H. Lawrence and the Child* (Columbia, Missouri: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1991), 44.

Remarking that madonna "lilies" reappear in the novel much later" (when Paul, as the narrative focus, controls the associations of the flower imagery) "still as an emblem of Paul's union with his mother", Sklenicka explains that the parthenogenesis had already fulfilled Paul's later need to deny the God in Morel and celebrate the Christ in himself. In having Paul mystically "melt-out" with Gertrude, "Lawrence would seem to be associating the event with the angel Gabriel's announcement of the Incarnation to Mary, Mrs Morel with the Virgin Mary, and Paul with the Christ child. . . for the effect of the Annunciation is to replace suspicion of an earthly father with the belief that the Holy Ghost is the father".[12]

Morel, of course, is not Paul's only competitor for the affections of his Madonna; and Lawrence uses the icon to inform more than the Oedipal through a series of Christmas births. Morel's "sensuous flame of life" kindles Gertrude's dormant sexuality when she "met him at a christmas party" (17). "Last Christmas she had married him, [and] this Christmas she would bear him a child" (21). That child, whose biographical model was born in June,[13] was Gertrude's first Christ, the one to supplant Morel as lover, the William of whom Paul "was unconsciously jealous". Gertrude recognises in Paul, "delicate" and sad like Jérôme and Michel, the sensitive "lamb" (50) of God, but denies him his final nativity until the Christmas after William's death. When Paul "wandered blindly" home with pneumonia on "the 23rd of December", Mrs Morel realised, "I should have watched the living, not the dead" (170-71). And in a variation of Christianity's central paradox--or of Lawrence's Phoenix myth--death leads to rebirth: because William has died and Paul nearly follows in his footsteps, "Mrs Morel's life now rooted itself in Paul" (171).

The principal importance of the Madonna icon in Mrs Morel lies in the structural contrast it offers to the Virgin-Mother in Miriam. Paul praises in Gertrude that which he condemns in Miriam. Niven wonders if, "perhaps, Lawrence remained unaware" "that Paul's most positive

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[12]Sklenicka, footnote 11 on p. 44. Sklenicka builds her argument on Daniel Dervin's suggestion that the scene allows Gertrude "to undergo something on the order of a second impregnation, or pollination, by means of purely natural elements". "*A Strange Sapience*", *The Creative Imagination of D.H. Lawrence* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 129.

[13]Moore, 25, gives 22 June 1878 as the birthdate of William Ernest Lawrence.

source of revulsion against Miriam later in the novel will be his sense that she consciously emulates Christ's mother and seems to want to make him both her son and her lord".[14] But to conclude that "the beatific imagery works on one hand to dignify Mrs Morel and on the other to belittle Miriam", mistakenly assumes that Miriam, as Paul suggests, does "want a Christ in him" (463) and that Paul and Lawrence are of a single mind throughout the novel. This study will argue that Lawrence is indeed aware of the discrepancy, and that, through a number of narrative techniques, he distances himself sufficiently from Paul to arrive at a balanced view of Miriam. A reading that accounts for the opinions of other characters, the ironic detachment through structure, language, and ambiguity, one that balances the dramatic with the narrated, suggests Gertrude is the more defective Madonna and Paul an abusive Christ Child. She, more than Miriam, fosters Paul's separation of body and soul; and she, in refusing to allow Paul to love someone much like herself, propels her Christ toward a double matricide.

Isolated from their larger context, Paul's two Botticelli allusions simply seem to add metaphorical fuel to what has become his central thesis about Miriam: her rigourous spirituality denies the possibility of any physical element in their lad-and- girl love. Miriam deems the "Coons"[15] his family enjoys during their vacation to be insufferably common, so "she always reminded Paul of some sad Botticelli angel when she sang, even when it was: 'Come down Lover's Lane/ For a walk with me, talk with me--'" (215). When Paul would like to "ask her for the other thing", Miriam's image responds: "She sang like a nun singing to heaven. It reminded him so much of the mouth and eyes of one who sings beside a Botticelli Madonna, so spiritual" (323). Paul has cast Miriam as the resigned and sterile, life-denying Botticelli stereotype Lawrence describes in his "Study of Thomas Hardy", an essay begun less than two years after the completion of *Sons and Lovers* .[16] The parallels between the Botticelli references surrounding Miriam and the conclusions drawn in the essay seem to confirm Lawrence's own

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[14]Niven, 39.

[15]American style song and dance revues, in which the troupe wore "black face" make-up and satirised "Negro" mannerisms.

[16]Lawrence writes Edward Garnett on 19 November 1912, "I sent you the MS of the Paul Morel novel . . . yesterday", *Letters*, I, 476. In a letter dated 5 September, Lawrence tells J. B. Pinker that he has begun his "book on Thomas Hardy", *Letters*, II, 212.

admission that his philosophical abstractions spring from his fiction; that the fiction is not under the strictest teleological control--it requires a dynamic: "The novels and poems come unwatched out of one's pen. And then the absolute need which one has for some sort of satisfactory mental attitude towards oneself and things in general makes one try to abstract some definite conclusions from one's experience as a writer and a man".[17]

The conclusions Lawrence hopes to abstract in the essay's section on "Maleness and Femaleness in Art" address the ideal complementary relationship between men and women in general, between Madonna and child specifically.

> The goal of the male impulse is the announcement of motion, endless diversity, endless change. The goal of the female impulse is the announcement of infinite oneness, of infinite stability. When the two are working together in combination, as they must in life, there is, as it were, a dual motion, centrifugal for the male, fleeing abroad, away from the centre, outward to infinite vibration, and centripetal for the female, fleeing in to the eternal centre of rest. . . . The cathedrals, Fra Angelico, frighten us with their final annunciation of centrality and stability. We want to escape. The influence is too female for us.
>
> In Botticelli, the architecture remains, but there is the wonderful movement outwards, the joyous if still clumsy escape from the centre. His religious pictures tend to be stereotyped, resigned. The Primavera herself is static, melancholy, a stability become almost a negation. It is if the female, instead of being the great, unknown Positive, towards which all must flow, became the great Negative, the centre which denied all motion. And the Aphrodite stands there not as a force, to draw all things unto her, but as the naked, almost unwilling pivot, as the keystone which endured all thrust and remained static. But still there is the joy, the great motion around her, sky and sea, all the elements and living, joyful sources.[18]

Surely there is something of Miriam in Lawrence's interpretation of Botticelli's female icons. The point Lawrence makes through the

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[17]Cited by Moore, 235.

[18]"Study of Thomas Hardy", 69.

complexity of his larger context, however, is that Paul, as if he were painting one of his sketches, fashions Miriam through language and expectation into "Negative" postures, when in fact it is Gertrude who denies more Paul's "outward motion".

What Louis Martz describes as Lawrence's innovative technique, "by which he can manage the deep autobiographical problems that underlie the book", is at work in the Botticelli references.

> We are watching the strong graft of a stream of consciousness growing out of the live trunk of that Victorian prologue [Part One], and intertwining with the objectively presented action. The point of view adopted is that of Paul; but since confusion, self-deception, and desperate self-justification are essential to that point of view, we can never tell, from that stream of consciousness alone, where the real truth lies. But we can tell it by seeking out the portrait of Miriam that lies beneath the overpainted commentary of the Paul narrator.[19]

What Paul needs desperately to justify in both scenes is his cruelty towards Miriam; the self-deception he hopes to sustain is that Miriam's abnormal spirituality rather than his mothers' abnormal possessiveness is the principal obstacle to a balanced lad-and-girl relationship.

The "Coons" incident comes near the end of "Lad-and-Girl Love", just when the physical serpent has entered the garden of the two sensitive puritans. Paul's sexual confusion, coupled with his mother's jealous criticisms of Miriam, increasingly provokes his own cruelty. On the eve of Mrs Morel's first holiday, Miriam, at Paul's suggestion, spends her first night with his family. Gertrude establishes the tone immediately, sitting "jealously in her own chair"--"she was going to hear also" when Paul wants to read a poem to Miriam (212). Just prior to Paul's Botticelli abstraction of Miriam, the objective narrator implies that Mrs Morel has monopolised her son throughout the trip. It is Lawrence rather than Paul who suggests the abnormality of his relationship with

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[19]Louis L. Martz, "Portrait of Miriam: A Study in the Design of *Sons and Lovers*", *Imagined Worlds: Essays on Some English Novelists in Memory of John Butt*, ed. Maynard Mack (London: Methuen, 1968), 351.

his mother, the complete insensitivity toward Miriam: "On the whole, he stuck to her as if he were *her* man" (214).

Lawrence establishes early in the chapter a narrative pattern whereby Mrs Morel's jealous criticisms of Miriam increasingly punctuate the afternoons and evenings Paul spends with the girl. Made to feel guilty for abandoning Gertrude so soon after William's death, Paul unleashes the mother's fury and attitudes on Miriam; for what the narrator says about Paul's political views is true for his views on Miriam: "Paul had already heard his mother's views, and as these were as yet his own, he argued for her" (189).

> Always when he went with Miriam, and it grew rather late, he knew his mother was fretting and getting angry about him, why he could not understand. As he went into the house, flinging down his cap, his mother looked up at the clock. . . . She could feel Paul being drawn away by this girl. And she did not care for Miriam. "She is one of those who will want to suck a man's soul out till he has none of his own left", she said to herself; "and he is just such a gaby as to let himself be absorbed. She will never let him become a man, she never will." So, while he was away with with Miriam, Mrs Morel, grew more and more worked up.
>
> She glanced at the clock, and said, coldly, and rather tired:
>
> "You have been far enough tonight."
>
> His soul, warm and exposed from contact with the girl, shrank. (196)

Clearly the Mrs Morel who makes Paul's soul "shrink" is the spiritual vampire, the soul sucker; Miriam's effect has been warm and expansive. As Louis Martz sees, "the mother has described only herself in the above quotation", yet the malleable son "soon adopts the mother's view of Miriam's 'possessive' nature. He cannot help himself, but there is no reason why readers of the book should accept the mother's view of Miriam, which is everywhere shown to be motivated by the mother's possessiveness".[20]

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[20]Martz, 353.

What Martz defines as the Paul-narrator's tendency to "overpaint" points to another flaw in the son's portrait of Miriam. In complicity with his mother's views of Miriam is the aspiring painter's need to abstract her. The Botticelli simile serves merely as a preface for larger comparisons.

> She had a straight chin, that went in a perpendicular line from the lower lip to the turn. She always reminded Paul of some sad Botticelli angel when she sang. . . .
>
> Only when he sketched, or at evening when the others were at the Coons, she had him to herself. He talked to her endlessly about his love of horizontals: how they, the great levels of sky and land in Lincolnshire, meant to him the eternality of the will, just as the bowed Norman arches of the church, repeating themselves, meant the dogged leaping forward of the persistent human soul, on and on, nobody knows where: in contradiction to the perpendicular lines and to the gothic arch which, he said, leapt up at heaven and touched the ecstasy and lost itself in the divine. Himself, he said was Norman, Miriam was Gothic. She bowed in consent even to that. (215)

Where Jérôme would reduce Alissa to allegory, Paul would reduce Miriam to a Pre-Raphaelite sketch. Unable to freeze her in iconic postures with brush strokes, Paul attempts to preserve Miriam in language. He is what he "loves", the persistent human soul, leaping ever forward in celebration of the world. She is, obviously, what he does not love, the "contradicting" spiritual obsessive, who must elevate human love to "the high plane of abstraction" (209-10). What chance has Miriam against her "teacher", the only source of the "learning" she "was mad to have" "whereon to pride herself" (174). "*Even*" to this cruel reduction of her complexity as an individual the humble student must "bow", ironically (Lawrence's pun) like Paul's beloved "bowed" Norman arches.[21]

This is the same sort of deadening intellectual abstraction Lawrence decries in the Hardy essay. Botticelli and his resigned Madonnas succeed to Raphael, who,

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[21] Tamara Alinei holds that "it is Paul who engages in monologues on Norman and Gothic architecture, relating his character and that of Miriam to this abstraction, while Miriam seems to accept the description only resignedly". "D.H. Lawrence's Natural Imagery: A Non-Vitalist Reading", *Dutch Quarterly* 6 (1976),125.

> knowing that his desire reaches out beyond the range of possible experience, sensible that he will not find satisfaction in any one woman, sensible that the female impulse does not, or cannot unite in him with the male impulse sufficiently to create a stability, an eternal moment of truth for him, or realisation, closes his eyes and his mind upon experience, and abstracting himself, reacting upon himself, produces the geometric conception of the fundamental truth, departs from religion, from any God-idea, and becomes philosophic.[22]

Paul, producing geometric conceptions around "perpendicular" Miriam, hopes to hold her responsible for the "high plane of abstraction, when his natural fire of love was transmitted into the fine stream of thought" (210). Lawrence, however, through dramatisation and Paul's own testimony, suggests Paul is the greater abstracter. Compare what Lawrence sees as Raphael's "platonic" tendency with another attempt by Paul to fashion Miriam's character and attitudes. Not long before the Botticelli abstractions, the reader learns, Paul

> would not have it that they were lovers. The intimacy between them had been kept so abstract, such a matter of the soul, all thought and weary struggle into consciousness, that he saw it only as a Platonic friendship. He stoutly denied there was anything else between them. Miriam was silent, or else she very quietly agreed. He was a fool who did not know what was happening to himself. By tacit agreement they ignored the remarks and insinuations of their acquaintances.
>
> "We aren't lovers, we are friends," he said to her. "*We* know it. Let them talk. What does it matter what they say." (209)

Even before the narrative point of view flows to Miriam, the Paul-focussed narrator's refusal to "have it that they were lovers" admits to at least partial responsibility for the platonic abstractions. Miriam's silence and humble agreement, which prefigure her subsequent "bow[ing] in consent", shifts even more of the culpability to Paul. The objective narrator's charge of Paul's emotional ignorance tilts the scales even further, as does Paul's bullying reminder of what Miriam is to believe.

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[22]"Study of Thomas Hardy", 70.

Lawrence casts Paul's language so that his simple declarative sentences take on the insistency of imperatives: "We aren't lovers, we are friends".

Interestingly, Jessie Chambers, convinced that Lawrence gave the "laurels of victory to his mother"[23] in *Sons and Lovers,* seems to ignore that Lawrence the detached artist agrees with her condemnation of the young Bert's coercive abstractions. During a period of their relationship that corresponds to the courtship chapters, Jessie recalls

> Lawrence had found a new name for me. I was no longer the Emily Brontë; I was a pre-Rapaelite woman. I disliked the new label even more than the old one. It made me feel that for him I was becoming less and less of a suffering, struggling human being, and more and more of a mental concept, a pure abstraction.[24]

Lawrence and Jessie seem to coincide in even the same example, given the influence of Botticelli's sad-eyed Madonnas on the Pre-Raphaelites. And the Paul who would freeze Miriam in these icons is the same young painter who first casts her in the pastoral 'Girl in the Doorway' (see Introduction), who tells one of the girls in the Spiral department she reminds him of "Elaine in the *Idylls of the King*" (137), who reduces Miriam's little brother to "one of Reynolds' 'Choir of Angels'" (183). Even Baxter Dawes recognises the patronising abstracter in Paul: "From the first day he had hated Paul. Finding the lad's impersonal, deliberate gaze of an artist on his face, he got into a fury" (224).

The scene immediately after the Botticelli and architectural similes seems to confirm that the principal aim of Paul's "platonic" abstractions is to keep Miriam, as Diane Bonds says, "non sexual and virginal". One dark, still evening Paul is walking with Miriam along the beach.

> From behind the sandhills came the whisper of the sea. Paul and Miriam walked in silence. Suddenly he started. The whole of his blood seemed to burst into flame, and he could scarcely breathe. An enormous orange moon was

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[23]Jessie Chambers, *D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Record by "E.T.",* 2nd ed. (London: Frank Cass, 1965), 212. Hereafter referred to as "*E. T.* "

[24]"*E.T*"., 145.

> staring at them from the rim of the sandhills. He stood still, looking at it.
>
> "Ah!" cried Miriam, when she saw it.
>
> He remained perfectly still, staring at the immense and ruddy moon, the only thing in the far-reaching darkness of the level. His heart beat heavily, the muscles of his arms contracted.
>
> "What is it?" murmured Miriam, waiting for him.
>
> He turned and looked at her. She stood beside him, for ever in shadow. Her face, covered with the darkness of her hat, was watching him unseen. But she was brooding. She was slightly afraid--deeply moved and religious. That was her best state. He was impotent against it. His blood was concentrated like a flame in his chest. But he could not get across to her. There were flashes in his blood. But somehow she ignored them. She was expecting some religious state in him. Still yearning, she was half aware of his passion, and gazed at him, troubled.
>
> "What is it?" she murmured again.
>
> "It's the moon," he answered, frowning.
>
> "Yes," she assented. "Isn't it wonderful?" She was curious about him. The crisis was past.
>
> He did not know himself what was the matter. He was naturally so young, and their intimacy was so abstract, he did not know he wanted to crush her to his breast to ease the ache there. He was afraid of her. The fact that he might want her as a man wants a woman had in him been suppressed into a shame. When she shrank in her convulsed, coiled torture from the thought of such a thing, he had winced to the depths of his soul. And now this 'purity' prevented even their first love kiss. It was as if she could scarcely stand the shock of physical love, even a passionate kiss, and then he was too shrinking and sensitive to give it. (215-16)

Mark Spilka underpins his conclusion that "Miriam *shrinks* away from actual contact" here with the last sentence in the passage,[25] even though it seems to be the Paul-narrator who willingly admits that his own "*shrinking* " accounts for at least part of the problem (emphases mine). The only time the reader has seen Miriam "shrink" in her "convulsed, coiled, torture" is when she "recoil[s] almost in anguish" at the suggestion of the barnyard "business of birth and of begetting", not a surprising reaction from a sensitive young Victorian woman, who might well assume such a response is expected of her at the mention of such

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[25]Mark Spilka,*The Love Ethic of D.H. Lawrence* (Bloomington: Univ. of Indiana Press, 1955), 65.

"grossness" (198).[26] And even here the objective narrator prefaces the comment by noting that Paul and Miriam were *both* "late in coming to maturity" (198). The reader might wonder, too, if Paul, in remembering this, is crassly likening wanting Miriam "as a woman" to farmyard desire.[27] Paul, not Miriam, does all the shrinking under the influence of the moon. He can scarcely breathe, the muscles of his arm "contract", *he* could get not get across to her. "What is being dramatized in fact", concludes Tamara Alinei, "is a painful emotional conflict in Paul".[28]

All the reader can know with certainty about Miriam's reaction to the moon is that she finds it awe-inspiring and "wonderful". It seems likely that Paul's "crisis", rather than the sensual moon, provokes Miriam's "fear". Arguably, too, the narrative point of view stays with Paul when the reader is told Miriam has worked herself into a religious ecstasy that leaves Paul "impotent", a convenient bit of sophistry to excuse himself from the charge of "unmanly" sexual prudery. Besides, with Miriam "in shadow", her "face covered with the darkness of her hat", how could her attitudes discourage his passion? And how could Paul determine Miriam is to blame when, as the objective narrator adds, "he did not know himself what was the matter". Clearly, the "fear", the "abstract" intimacy, the "purity", and the "shrinking" sensitivity are as much Paul's as they are Miriam's.

Paul compares Miriam to a Botticelli icon the second time at the beginning of "The Test on Miriam". And once again, Lawrence balances Paul's criticism by framing it with references to the possessive Gertrude and Paul's need to blame Miriam for his own sexual diffidence.

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[26]Carol Dix, in *D.H Lawrence and Women* (London: Macmillan, 1989), provides another cogent reason why Miriam would recoil here. "She wanted more in life than marriage and motherhood, and so sex had become equated to her with pregnancy. Hence, she looks at the mare in horror and cannot bear the thought of the mare's life. Paul sees it as a denial of sexuality, that she won't give in. Another woman could understand what Miriam felt: 'It could never be mentioned that the mare was in foal'" (31).

[27]John Worthen, in *D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years*, 1885-1912. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), reveals that, according to Neville Chambers, it was Lawrence who recoiled from "barnyard business." "Discussion at the Haggs Farm about serving the sow and taking the cows to the bull had at first bewildered and then disgusted Lawrence" (153).

[28]Alinei, 125.

> He looked around. A good many of the nicest men he knew were like himself, bound in by their own virginity, which they could not break out of. They were so sensitive to their women that they would go without them for ever rather than do them a hurt, an injustice. Being the sons of mothers whose husbands had blundered rather brutally through their feminine sanctities, they were themselves too diffident and shy. They could easier deny themselves than incur any reproach from a woman. For a woman was like their mother. They preferred themselves to suffer the misery of celibacy, rather than risk the other person. . . .
>
> He went back to her. Something in her, when he looked at her, brought the tears almost to his eyes. One day he stood behind her as she sang. Annie was playing a song on the piano. As Miriam sang her mouth seemed hopeless. She sang like a nun singing to heaven. It reminded him so much of the mouth and eyes of one who sings beside a Botticelli Madonna, so spiritual. Again, hot as steel, came up the pain in him.Why must he ask her for the other thing?. . .
>
> Mrs Morel saw him going again frequently to Miriam, and was astonished. He said nothing to his mother. He did not explain nor excuse himself. If he came home late, and she reproached him, he frowned and turned on her in an overbearing way:
>
> "I shall come home when I like," he said; "I am old enough."
>
> "Must she keep you till this time?"
>
> "It is I who stay," he answered.
>
> "And she lets you--but very well," she said.
>
> And she went back to bed, leaving the door unlocked for him. But she lay listening until he came, often long after. It was a great bitterness to her that he had gone back to Miriam. (323-24)

Once again Lawrence's narrative frame suggests that Paul's need to abstract Miriam in a posture of "hopeless" spirituality responds to his own struggle with "virginity". Throughout their relationship he has used language to, in Bonds' words, "direct [Miriam] toward a view of herself that is directed by his own psychological requirements".[29] The more Miriam denies the charge that she is abnormally prudish, the more Paul insists on fashioning her into the icon of the sad-eyed Virgin Mary. Inevitably, if the Paul-narrator refuses to admit his own ambivalence, Lawrence shifts the narrative point of view to Miriam or the objective

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[29]Bonds, 143.

narrator to support a portrait of Miriam as a healthy and normal young woman.

> "I wish you could laugh at me for just one minute. . . ."
> "I do laugh at you--I *do*."
> "Never! . . . When you laugh I could always cry, it seems as if it shows up your suffering . . . ."
> Slowly she shook her head, despairingly.
> "I'm sure I don't want to," she said.
> "I'm so damned spiritual with *you* always," he cried.
> She remained silent, thinking 'Then why don't you be otherwise.' (226)

> "If only you could want *me*, and not what I can reel off for you!"
> "I!", she cried bitterly--"I! Why when would you let me take you?"
> "Then it's my fault," he said, and gathering himself together, he got up and began to talk trivialities. He felt insubstantial. In a vague way, he hated her for it. And he knew he was as much to blame himself. This however, did not prevent his hating her. (223)

Even Clara senses the sexual insecurity behind Paul's verbal sculpting:

> "I suppose you're afraid," she said.
> "I'm not. Something in me shrinks from her like hell--she's so good, when I'm not good."
> "How do you know what she is?"
> "I do! I know she wants a sort of soul union."
> "But how do you know what she wants?"
> "I've been with her for seven years."
> "And you haven't found out the very first thing about her."
> "What's that?"
> "That she doesn't want any of your soul communion. That's your own imagination. She wants you."
> He pondered over this. Perhaps he was wrong.
> "But she seems--" he began.
> "You've never tried," she answered. (321)

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Of interest, too, in this second Botticelli allusion is the implied causal relationship between Gertrude's possessiveness and Paul's sexual anxiety. The embittered Mrs Morel blames Miriam for "kill[ing] the joy

and warmth in him", while Lawrence has suggested that Paul's double-edged guilt toward her accounts for much of his moodiness: guilt for abandoning the mother who lived for him alone, guilt for desiring sexually a "woman who was like [his] mother". For if Paul unconsciously confuses his two Madonna figures, Miriam stands to lose no matter how she reacts to Paul's advances. If she continues to resist, he will continue to blame her for his own sexual anxiety; if she consummates their relationship, he becomes vicariously what he hates even more--the father who "brutally" blundered through his mother's "sanctity". Perhaps Lawrence's most severe criticism of Paul is that, ironically, he ultimately proves to be less sensitive than Morel. The son who had been given the education denied his father's generation, proves to be as pernicious in his teaching as he is in his abstractions.

Instead of teaching Miriam to be a new-order Madonna, Paul, who has encouraged her virginity through language and iconic abstractions, freezes her into the narrowest vision of the old. Miriam hopes her teacher, "who could be gentle and who could be sad" (174), who could read even French poetry, will stand as her champion against the brothers "whom she considered brutal louts" (173). Instead, Paul encourage her humility all the more. The Paul-narrator's description of his first meal at the Leivers' home seems to sympathize with Miriam's view. The brothers whose "trampling farm-boots" muck-up "her clean red floor" (173), "troop in" to this "brutal board" that spells humiliation for Miriam and her mother. "The meal went rather brutally. The over gentleness and apologetic tone of the mother brought out all the brutality of manner in the sons" (177). In the face of Edgar's indignation over "a few burnt potatoes", Miriam's only defence is to "swallow her anger and her shame, bowing her dark head".

Lawrence informs Paul's failure as Miriam's intellectual mentor by assigning to him the same language and manner with which he has characterised the brothers' "brutal trampling". Initially Paul is patient, seeming to recognise Miriam is much like himself, the boy who "suffered very much from the first contact with anything" (113). As Louis Martz cogently argues, a balanced reading of the initial lessons so often

interpreted as "revelations of Miriam's diminished vitality",[30] reveals instead that "she is a girl of rich potential".[31] After Paul cajoles her into suffering at the first contact of the pecking hen--"she gave a little cry--fear, and pain because of fear"--Miriam is pleased "she had done it, and she did it again". In response to Paul's reassuring "It doesn't hurt, does it", Miriam's excitement shows in her "dilated dark eyes. 'No,' she laughed, trembling" (157). She suffers again when Paul encourages her to swing with abandon on the phallic rope, but clearly she finds the sureness of her teacher's touch to be a sensually pleasurable counterpoint to her fear: "She was in his hands. Again, firm and inevitable came the thrust at the right moment. She gripped the rope, almost swooning" (182). Mark Spilka, seeing here Lawrence's suggestion of "the future sexual problem",[32] leaves the scene when Miriam finally convinces Paul to desist--"She began to breathe". The lesson ends, however, with an interior monologue that suggests, instead, Miriam's attraction to sensual warmth:

> Away he went. There was something fascinating to her in him. For the moment he was nothing but a piece of swinging stuff, not a particle of him that did not swing. She could never lose herself so, nor could her brothers. It roused a warmth in her. It were almost as if he were a flame that had lit a warmth in her, whilst he swung in the middle air. (182)

But Paul's empathy for a kindred spirit proves short-lived when he begins to teach Miriam the lessons she hopes will give her a man's chances. Failing to see Miriam's similarity to himself, "the sort of boy that becomes a clown and a lout as soon as he is not understood, or feels himself held cheap" (113), "he stormed at her, got ashamed, continued the lesson, and grew furious again, abusing her". "Occasionally, very rarely, she defended herself" (188). More often she retreats into the posture she assumes with her brothers, "so utterly humble before the lesson", "shrinking, knowing he was angered" (188). Lawrence employs the same pattern and language to describe the lessons in French and theology. When Paul reads Baudelaire to Miriam, "his voice was soft and

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[30]Martz, 346, cites Julian Moynahan, *The Deed of life: The Novels and Tales of D.H. Lawrence* (Princeton: University Press, 1963), 17, as an example of a commonly held critical attitude toward Miriam.

[31]Martz, 347.

[32]Spilka, 53.

caressing, but growing almost brutal" (248). A moment before, the objective narrator has described Miriam like the Shulamite of the Song of Songs, "looking up" at Paul, "her dark eyes . . . naked with their love, afraid, and yearning", "coloured like a pomegranate for richness" (247). Now that desire has deformed Paul's visage--"He had a way of lifting his lips and showing his teeth, passionately and bitterly, when he was much moved.This he did now. It made Miriam feel as if he were trampling on her. She dared not look at him, but sat with her head bowed" (248). In theology lessons, "Miriam was the threshing-floor on which he threshed out all his beliefs. While he trampled his ideas upon her soul, the truth came out for him. . . . Almost impassive, she submitted to his argument and expounding" (267).

When Miriam is finally willing to turn her back on her mother's doctrine that sexual union is a "dreadful" sacrifice for the woman, once again it is Paul the teacher rather than his pupil who fails. Knowing that Miriam "worshipped him" (263) and that she would only concede to physical communion if it were elevated to a near-religious plane, Paul has "*taught* " her "possession was a great moment in life. All strong emotions concentrated there" (328). He instructed Miriam to believe "there was something divine in it"; yet instead of introducing her tenderly to this other "communion" (341), Paul tramples brutally on the sensitive girl. Lawrence allows Paul's language to betray his egocentricity. He has accused Miriam of always "wheedl[ing] the soul out of things" (257), yet he must stand self-accused for having chosen "possession" as his euphemism for sexual intercourse.[33]

It is language and motif, again, that suggest Miriam might have experienced some pleasure in her "sacrifice" if Paul had treated her with increased sensitivity. While Paul's suggestive thrown cherries "startle and frighten" Miriam In the prelude to their consummation, she coquettishly picked up "two fine red pairs" and "hung [them] over her ears" before watching nature's metaphorical prefigurement of her love-making with Paul (329).

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[33]Tellingly the same euphemism Michel chooses on the night he takes Marceline ("Ce fut cette nuit-là que je possédai Marceline" [73]). And, as is true in Paul's case, there is nothing in the text to suggest that Marceline wants to dominate Michel.

> She went to the fence and sat there, watching the gold cloud fall to pieces, and go in immense, rose coloured ruin towards the darkness. Gold flamed to scarlet, like pain in its intense brightness. Then the scarlet sank to rose, and rose to crimson, and quickly the passion went out of the sky. (330)

The poetic logic of Lawrence's linguistic motifs defies reduction to a single implication. Paul's scarlet western sky (50), the sign of his baptism in the blood of the Morels' conjugal wars, leaves Miriam's romance-fed visions in rose-coloured ruin", her "annunciation" of Paul as the "one rift of rich gold" (201) given her by the sun in pieces. The connotations of gold, however, go beyond Miriam's feckless dreaming. Opposed as well to Paul's destructive "possession" is the sensual baptism effected by the "dusky, golden softness of [Morel's] sensuous flame of life" (18).

As "brutal" as Morel becomes once Gertrude has "destroyed him", Paul's father had initiated with candle-flame tenderness another "deeply religious" puritan, one who, as does Miriam, "liked most of all . . . an argument on religion or philosophy or politics with some educated man" (17). Dorothy Van Ghent understands Morel's sensual softness as a characteristic of the "simple masculine integrity" that Gertrude's "possessiveness has injured in the sons",[34] a trait that makes Morel the unlikely literary progenitor of the gamekeeper who stood for "the touch of tenderness".[35]

> Morel talks the dialect that is the speech of physical tenderness in Lawrence's books. It is the dialect of his father that Paul reverts to when he is tussling with Beatrice in adolescent erotic play (letting the mother's bread burn that he should have been watching), and that Arthur, the only one of the sons whom the mother has not corrupted, uses in his love-making, and that Paul uses again when he makes love to Clara, the uncomplex woman who is able for a while to give him his sexual manhood and his "separate selfhood." The sons never use the dialect with their mother, and Paul never uses it with Miriam. It is the speech used by Mellors in *Lady*

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[34]Dorothy Van Ghent, "On *Sons and Lovers*", *Sons and Lovers*, Viking Critical Edition, ed. Julian Moynahan (New York: Penguin, 1968, 1981), 537.

[35]*Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 292.

Chatterley's Lover; and, significantly perhaps, Mellors' name is an anagram of the name Morel.[36]

Paul faults Dawes, another Morel analogue,[37] for not bringing new life to Clara--"And he didn't wake you?" (317)--but ignores the cause: "He--sort of degraded me. He wanted to bully me, because he hadn't got me" (318). "Getting" demands giving, ensuring that, as Paul admits, "the real, real flame of feeling [passes] through another person" (362). While his "flame had . . . lit a warmth in her" (182) on his phallic swing ("the great thick rope") and helped "kindle" Miriam's soul at their "communion" (195), Paul fails to awaken Miriam because he denies *her* "separate selfhood" in his brutal onanism. Clearly Miriam's fear has not ousted entirely her fervour. Once the meteorological foreshadowing of their tryst turns the world to dark grey, Paul scrambles down the tree with his cherries, "tearing his shirt sleeve as he did so", to a most sympathetic and receptive Miriam.

> "They are lovely," said Miriam; fingering the cherries.
>
> "I've torn my sleeve," he answered.
>
> She took the three-cornered rip, saying:
>
> "I shall have to mend it."
>
> It was near the shoulder. She put her fingers through the tear.
>
> "How warm!" she said.
>
> He laughed. There was a new strange note in his voice, one that made her pant.
>
> "Shall we stay out?" he said.
>
> "Wont it rain?" she asked.
>
> "No, let us walk a little way".
>
> They went down the fields and into the thick plantation of fir-trees and pines.
>
> "Shall we go in among the trees?" he asked.
>
> "Do you want to?"
>
> "Yes."
>
> It was very dark among the firs, and the sharp pines pricked her face. She was afraid. Paul was silent and strange.

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[36]Van Ghent, 538-39.

[37]Alinei draws convincingly the comparisons among Morel, Arthur, and Baxter Dawes. "In Baxter Dawes we encounter for the second time in *Sons and Lovers* a sensuous, non-mental, dialect-speaking working man, that is to say a man who resembles Walter Morel, or better, a character who Lawrence invests with a great many of Morel's qualities" (50).

> "I like the darkness," he said. "I wish it were thicker--good, thick darkness."
>
> He seemed to be almost unaware of her, as a person: she was only to him then, a woman. She was afraid.
>
> He stood against a pine-tree trunk and took her in his arms. She relinquished herself to him--but it was a sacrifice, in which she felt something of horror. This thick-voiced, oblivious man was a stranger to her. (330)

While it is difficult to know to what extent Miriam is consciously seductive, there is a sensual signal in her touch, a note of pleasure in the "strange warmth" Paul has identified as "blood heat" (263). Certainly she knows those "frightening" but "wonderful" pine-trees well enough to divine Paul's intentions. The trees frighten her now, but Paul recognizes that fear, biblical brother to "reverence," always combines in the admixture that is her "best state", "deeply moved and religious" (216); and Lawrence's conscious ambiguity of the verb "pant" suggests that sensual excitement might well account for some of Miriam's fear.

Surely her mother's belief that this was a "dreadful" sacrifice to bear still frightens Miriam, but probably not as much as Paul's failure to elevate their first sexual union to the promised "high-water mark of living" (335). Miriam had convinced herself that there was "something deeper" in Paul that elevated him above "other men, seeking [their] satisfaction" (328). This Paul, however, "strange" in voice, in his silence, and in his lurid paean to "good, thick darkness", tumbles from his divinity, bringing her down with him. He *was* "only like other men" after all, and the girl who needed to "fe[el] different from other people" (178) was "only to him then a woman". Miriam experiences "horror" because she has relinquished herself to a "thick-voiced, oblivious . . . stranger", where she had hoped to enter in communion with a gentle and poetic saviour. Clara later speaks out where the humble Miriam remains silent.

> "You talk," she said, "about the cruelty of women--I wish you knew the cruelty of men, in their brute force. They simply don't know that the woman exists."
>
> "Don't I? he said.
>
> "No," she answered.
>
> "Don't I know you exist?"

"About *me* you know nothing," she said bitterly--"about me!"

"Not more than Baxter knew?" he asked.

"Perhaps not as much." (406)

Paul's demystification proves Morel the superior divinity. The newly-wed Gertrude's appreciative wonder at "the golden softness . . . of his sensual flame" sets Morel apart from the coevals who had "blundered rather brutally" through their wives' "sanctities"; Miriam's horror at Paul's brutal oblivion of the woman who had trusted him to be gentle identifies him as their equal. And certainly Paul's brutish insensitivity contrasts poorly with Mellors's tenderness, his ability to marry the body and the soul in sexual union with Connie. The gamekeeper

> realized as he went into her that this was the thing he had to do, to come into tender touch, without losing his pride or his dignity or his integrity as a man. . . . 'I stand for the touch of bodily awareness between human beings,' he said to himself, 'and the touch of tenderness. And she is my mate. . . . Thank God I've got a woman who is with me, and tender and aware of me. Thank God she's not a bully, nor a fool. Thank God she's a tender, aware woman.' And as his seed sprang in her, his soul sprang towards her too, in the creative act that is far more than procreative.[38]

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"Lets make a sacrifice of Arabella," he said. "Let's burn her."

She was horrified, yet rather fascinated. She wanted to see what the boy would do. He made an altar of bricks, pulled some of the shavings out of Arabella's body, put the waxen fragments into the hollow face, poured on a little paraffin, and set the whole thing alight. He watched with wicked satisfaction the drops of wax melt off the broken forehead of Arabella, and drop like sweat into the flame. So long as the stupid big doll burned, he rejoiced in silence. At the end, he poked among the embers with a

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[38]*Lady Chatterley's Lover* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1960), 292. Subsequent parenthetical page numbers refer to this edition.

> stick, fished out the arms and legs, all blackened, and smashed them under stones.
>
> "That's the sacrifice of Missis Arabella," he said. "An' I'm glad there's nothing left of her."
>
> Which disturbed Annie inwardly, although she could say nothing. He seemed to hate the doll so intensely, because he had broken it. (82-83)

Paul's "brutal" failure as a teacher grows at least partially from what Julian Moynahan describes as an "unresolved incestuous attachment" for his mother, "combined with an unusually repressed childhood and adolescence", which makes it "impossible to fuse tender and sensual feelings into a wholesome love for a woman of [his] own age and station in life".[39] At first Paul can give only his soul to Miriam because he has projected upon her the same Virgin-Madonna icon he needs in Gertrude. But if Moynahan's Oedipal corollary is accurate--"These men are sexually attracted by women who are in some way inferior to them"[40]--need one look immediately to Clara? Arguably Paul unconsciously "breaks" both Madonna icons in his brutal "sacrifice" of Miriam.

The setting for Paul and Miriam's week of passion seems to corroborate the confusion that leads Paul to blunder brutally through the virginity of a woman "much like his mother". Certainly Gertrude is never far from the cottage where Paul and Miriam play at husband and wife. Leaving his mother alone for the day to be with her rival "cast a shadow over Paul", who must convince himself "he was going to do as he liked" (332). Paul tells himself, too, it was his and Miriam's "cottage for the day, and they were man and wife", but immediately subjects Miriam to another invidious comparison: "He thought [Miriam] gave a feeling of home *almost* like his mother" (emphasis mine). Arguably this is the fairy-tale cottage the adolescent Paul meant to have once his rivals were gone. His ambition was, "when his father died, [to] have a cottage with his mother, paint and go out as he liked, and live happily

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[39]Julian Moynahan, "*Sons and Lovers*: The Search for Form", *Sons and Lovers*, Viking Critical Edition (New York: Viking, 1968, 1981), 571. Moynahan refers to Sigmund Freud's essay, "The Most Prevalent Form of Degradation in Erotic life", from *The Collected Papers of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 4, ed. Ernest Jones (New York: Basic Books, 1959),203-216, which develops "the same" psychological "split" "Lawrence develops in the novel".

[40]Moynahan, 571.

ever after" (114). In this cottage, with Miriam, however, Paul is able to overcome the prohibition against incest in taking the relationship with this Madonna surrogate beyond the spiritual. Miriam

> had the most beautiful hips he had ever imagined. He stood unable to move or speak, looking at her, his face half smiling with wonder. And then he wanted her, and threw off his things. And then, as he went forward to her, her hands lifted in a little pleading movement, and he looked at her face, and stopped. Her big brown eyes were watching him, still and resigned and loving; she lay as if she had given herself up to sacrifice: there was her body for him; but the look at the back of her eyes, like a creature awaiting immolation, arrested him, and all his blood fell back. . . .
>
> And he had to sacrifice her. For a second he wished he were sex-less, or dead. Then he shut his eyes again to her, and his blood beat back again. (333-34)

The text has already suggested several "normal" reasons for Miriam's trepidation: the difficulty of throwing off her mother's teachings even when she has philosophically denied them, the fear that Paul will, again, put her brutally "out of the count", the fear of ending in the "Gretchen way", perhaps the guilt for playing house in her grandmother's cottage. But the reader now knows Paul too well to believe all the hesitation is hers. Too often he has interpreted gestures and looks at the back of Miriam's eyes to find there his own insecurity. And for Paul, too, the text has provided several possible reasons in addition to the Oedipal for his own inhibiting guilt: his perceived betrayal of the mother who sits bitterly alone at home; blundering through the virginity he had himself reinforced in Miriam; desecrating a virginal Madonna at once Gertrude and Miriam.

While the exhaustive Oedipal interpretations[41] of *Sons and Lovers* would make redundant too much Freudian emphasis here, Daniel Weiss's thoughtful *Oedipus in Nottingham* casts the psychoanalytical in terms useful to this study. Looking to Ernest Jones's

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[41]Alfred Booth Kuttner's "A Freudian Appreciation", *The Psychoanalytic Review* 3.3 (1916), seems one of the most valuable early Freudian analyses; Frederick Hoffman's "Lawrence's Quarrel with Freud", *The Achievement of D.H. Lawrence*, eds. Hoffman and Harry T. Moore (Tulsa: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), one of the best modern studies.

analysis of "Hamlet's sexual revulsion, his cruel abuse of Ophelia, and his 'complex reaction' to his mother", Weiss finds much that might help clarify Paul's problems.[42] Jones sees in Hamlet's case "the splitting of the mother image which the infantile consciousness effects into two opposite pictures: one of the virginal madonna, an inaccessible saint towards whom all sensual approaches are unthinkable, and the other of a sensual creature accessible to everyone". Jones goes on to explain that in Hamlet's case of highly pronounced sexual repression, the prince would perceive both types as "hostile: the pure one out of resentment at her repulses, the sensual one out of the temptation she offers to plunge into guiltiness. Misogyny, as in the play, is the result".[43]

Weiss assigns Miriam as the "virginal madonna", "that aspect of the mother image that represents the spiritual, the physically untouchable".[44] "Having raised Miriam to the status of the virgin mother, Paul, because of his sexual repression, is full of 'resentment at her repulses'".[45] Weiss eventually implies that Clara is the tempting "sensual creature", "the opposite of Gertrude and Miriam, the 'harlot', another surrogate mother";[46] but the attendant "misogyny" in Jones's theory suggests that Paul may unconsciously cast Miriam in that role as well. Part of Miriam's hesitation is grounded in a social code much older than Freud's analyses. "He would be disappointed, he would find no satisfaction, and then he would go away" (328). Her prophecy, one that has proved true when countless young Christian men finally overcome the qualms of countless young Christian women, is realised when Paul spends a week with Miriam and, as the Paul narrator sees it, "wore her out with his passion before it was gone" (334). Paul blames Miriam's passivity, while Miriam sees in him "an infant which, when it has drunk its fill, throws away and smashes the cup" (340).

Faith Pullin, hearing an echo of the sublimated misogyny in the "smashing" of Annie's doll Arabella--"He seemed to hate the doll so

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[42]Daniel A. Weiss, *Oedipus in Nottingham: D.H. Lawrence* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), 48.

[43]Weiss, 49, cites Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1949), 85.

[44] Ibid.

[45]Weiss, 50.

[46]Weiss, 57.

intensely, because he had broken it" (83)--concludes, "in just the same way, Paul hates Miriam because he has broken her".[47] Pullin does not qualify exactly how Miriam "has failed to rise to Paul's requirements", but this reader cannot help but see Paul in Lawrence's analysis of Angel Clare. Lawrence, in the Hardy essay, begins with the premise that Tess is typical of all the women "approved of" in Hardy's novels, "passive subjects to the the male, the reecho from the male".[48] The same is true in the "Virgin worship", accounting for "the sadness of Botticelli's Virgins". Once Alec possesses the Virgin in Tess, she becomes for the Christian male the objectionable "sensual creature" Jones refers to.

> It is not Angel Clare's fault that he cannot come to Tess when he finds that she has, in his words, been defiled. It is the result of generations of ultra-Christian training, which had left in him an inherent aversion to the female. What he, in his Christian sense, conceived of, as woman, was only the servant and attendant and administering spirit to the male.[49]

Certainly in Miriam--"crouched on the hearthrug near [Paul's] feet" (224)--we see the subjected Tess. Arguably Angel is different from Paul only in that he was not the one who has "defiled", "worn out", "smashed" his fallen Botticelli Virgin. The Hardy context intrigues, too, in providing the allusive source for the doll's name. By "smashing" Miriam has Paul transformed her into an inferior Arabella, the coarse *femme fatale* in *Jude the Obscure*,[50] Jones's "sensual creature?

The smashed-doll episode seems to prefigure more than the discarding of Miriam. Paul's need to paint both Gertrude and Miriam as virginal Madonnas might suggest that this "delicate" young man, much like Michel and Jérôme, unfairly "kills" a surrogate Madonna that serves as the scapegoat for a mother who would suffocate the aspiring young man. Alastair Niven provides the clue in seeing that the same Madonna

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[47]Pullin, 56.

[48]"Hardy", 97.

[49]"Hardy", 95.

[50]Interestingly, in the same article, Lawrence conflates Hardy and Angel Clare in assuming they would be equally contemptuous of an Arabella. Lawrence explains Hardy's disdainful portrait of the pig-killer's daughter as "his personal revenge on her for her coarseness, which offends him, because he is something of an Angel Clare".

imagery "works on the one hand to dignify Mrs Morel and on the other to belittle Miriam",[51] though, again, this study argues that the "inconsistency" is Paul's rather than Lawrence's. Debatably, Lawrence draws the parallels to suggest an unconscious antagonism in Paul toward his mother; for nearly every time Paul lashes out at the possessive Madonna in Miriam, Lawrence reminds the reader that Gertrude is at fault.

When Paul cruelly lashes out at Miriam for "caressing . . . with her mouth" the "gold" daffodils--"You aren't positive, you're negative. You absorb, absorb". . . (257-58)--she has been no more "possessive" than Gertrude during her "Annunciation": "As she unfastened her brooch at the mirror, she smiled faintly to see her face all smeared with the yellow dust of lilies" (36).[52] Lawrence's narrative frame heightens the irony by suggesting Paul merely paraphrases the recent accusations born of Gertrude's possessiveness: "And she so exults in taking you from me--she's not like ordinary girls" (252). When Paul's "deliberate gaze of an artist" casts Miriam in an obvious Madonna posture with her brother, Paul "hated her":

> Her youngest brother was only five. He was a frail lad, with immense brown eyes in his quaint, fragile face; one of Reynolds's 'Choir of Angels,' with a touch of elf. Often Miriam kneeled to the child and drew him to her. . . . And, folding him in her arms, she swayed slightly from side to side with love, her eyes half closed, her voice drenched with love. . . .
>
> "What do you make such a *fuss* for!" cried Paul, all in suffering because of her extreme emotion. "Why can't you be ordinary with him?" (183-84)

Lawrence does seem to be chiding Miriam for her effusiveness, but the reader understands, too, Miriam's need for the one sibling who has not yet joined the "brutal" opposition. More to the point is the source of Paul's suffering. Paul "was thankful in his heart and soul that he had his mother, so sane and wholesome", yet he must recognize his delicate self and "unwholesome" mother in the portrait of Miriam he condemns:

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[51]Niven, 40.

[52]Not too long after Paul's cruel censure, he himself "wanted to drink" from a field of flowers. "As he gathered them, he ate the little yellow trumpets" (237).

> "And I've never--you know, Paul--I've never had a husband--not really--"
>
> He stroked his mother's hair and his mouth was on her throat. . . .
>
> "Well, I don't love her, mother," he murmured, bowing his head and hiding his eyes on her shoulder in misery. His mother kissed him a long, fervent kiss. (252)

Lawrence's closely-drawn parallels clearly show the big sister who sings "'Eh, my Hubert!' . . . in a voice heavy and surcharged with love" (183) to be less "negative" than the mother who cries "'My boy!' . . . in a voice trembling with passionate love" (252). During the agony surrounding his mother's sickness, Paul even submits uncomplainingly to the maternal in Clara: "And she pressed him to her breast, rocked him, soothed him like a child" (421). But as soon as Miriam assumes the Pietà posture--"she took his head to her bosom, and rocked him softly"--he suspects the possessive Madonna: "or did she want a Christ in him?" (462-3).

Miriam is not abnormally possessive or maternal. She knows it is precisely Paul's willingness to act "like a child of four" with his mother that has infected the relationship with her. Judith Farr sees "there is little to suggest that Miriam wants a child in Paul. What she wants in fact is for him to sever his infantile dependency on his mother".[53] Or, in Weiss's Freudian terms, Miriam demands that Paul face "a mature relationship between himself and another woman, not his mother. . . . It is Miriam's refusal to allow him to regress to the Nirvana, the paradisiac state of the infant, her insistence that he recognize her, that fills him with anguish".[54] But, with his capacity for self-deception, Paul insists on Miriam's maternal possessiveness. At their last meeting, he accuses, "you love me so much, you want to put me in your pocket. And I should die there smothered" (461). The charge must be considered in the light of both Paul's intentions in turning to Miriam--"He would leave himself to her. She was bigger and better than he. He would depend on her" (457)--and the suspicion that Paul's accusation merely paraphrases his mother's.

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[53]Judith Farr, ed. and intr. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of "Sons and Lovers"* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1970), 11.

[54]Weiss, 53. Martz, 358, cites the same excerpt to support a similar argument.

In an article that convincingly relates the doll-smashing episode to Louisa Alcott's *Little Women*, Grover Smith posits that "Lawrence saw in the doll-burning a symbol of male retaliation against female domestic ascendency".[55] Lawrence is careful not to limit the incident's effectiveness by tailoring it for any one symbolic application, so that it will serve as a metaphorical nexus for all of Paul's confused resentment towards women. The young boy's sublimated misogyny forces the reader to look to the past and the future for any possible hidden sources of the resentment. Grover finds that Paul, "being smothered under the civilized refinements of Mrs Morel, has a sufficient motive in battling crudely for his manhood".[56] Certainly the sacrifice, coming so close to the beginning of "The Young Life of Paul", lends a disquieting note to the narrator's remark that Paul was so "conscious" of his mother's feelings, that "when she fretted, he understood, and could have no peace" (82). And, in the light of the child's cruelty to his big sister, might the reader see in Paul the same unconscious resentment of maternal affection--"The smaller boy belonged at first almost entirely to Annie", the sister who "adored him" (82)--he experiences later in the face of Miriam's sisterly effusions?

But if indeed this symbolic matricide prefigures the later real matricide, Annie's principal function is a technical one: as co-conspirator with Paul here, she triggers the association in the reader's mind when she takes the same role at the death of Mrs Morel. As Daniel Dervin has noted, "we find out the doll-episode assumes decisive impotence, for when the mother languishes with terminal cancer, it is the same sibling pair, Paul and Annie, who lace her milk with morphia and 'laughed together like two conspiring children'" (437).[57] It would strain credibility to deny Paul the motive of euthanasia, but it would be reductive to deny the complexity of his feelings and the novel's "poetic logic" that suggest, at the same time, his need for "release". Just before he learns of his mother's terminal cancer, Paul thinks

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[55]Grover Smith, Jr., "The Doll Burners: D.H. Lawrence and Louisa Alcott", *Modern Language Quarterly* 19 (1958), 30.

[56]Smith, 31.

[57]Dervin, 85. Dervin credits William H. New, "Character as symbol: Annie's Role in *Sons and Lovers*", *DHL Review* 1 (1968), 31-43, for first making the connection.

> there was now a good deal of his life of which necessarily he could not speak to his mother. He had a life apart from her--his sexual life. The rest she still kept. But he felt he had to conceal something from her, and it irked him. There was a certain silence between them, and he felt he had, in that silence, to defend himself against her. He felt condemned by her. Then sometimes he hated her, and pulled at her bondage. His life wanted to free itself of her. It was like a circle where life turned back on itself, and got no farther. She bore him, loved him, kept him, and his love turned back into her, so that he could not be free to go forward with his own life, really love another woman. At this period, unknowingly, he resisted his mother's influence (389).

"Unknowingly" suggests that the objective and Paul-focussed narrative points of view interchange without transition to peer alternately into Paul's unconscious and conscious resentment; but to which should the reader ascribe the use of the reflexive pronoun "his life want[ing] to free itself", as if Paul were accusing the life force rather than himself for a murder yet to be committed?

The poetic logic closes the nativity motif with Paul's "grim" denial that the Madonna shall "live over Christmas" (437). Certainly the ironic admixture of poison and milk to kill the mother who had bore him and suckled him seems a morbidly fitting way to end the maternal possessiveness that poisoned his ability to love another woman. Rossman notes both this "grisly irony" and the timing in his symbolic interpretation. "Christmas is the birthdate, of course, of the Christian saviour, of the Word Incarnate--but this Christmas, for Paul, means the death of the incarnation of devouring, possessive mother love: and perhaps it means the beginning of Paul's own rebirth as a man, since Gertrude's death will force him to stand alone".[58] The incestuous cycle that began with Paul's birth to his mother on the Christmas after William's death, then, closes with a Christmas matricide that allows him to be born to himself. Having unfairly determined that Miriam is an equally tyrannous Madonna, he must "smash" her yet again. Refusing to be her "Christ", Paul leaves her "feeling dead".

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[58] Charles Rossman, "The Gospel According to D.H. Lawrence: Religion in *Sons and Lovers*", *DHL Review* 3.1 (1970), 35.

2. The Madonna-Muse

In so far as *Sons and Lovers* is a *Künstlerroman*, Lawrence seems to grant the Miriam Madonna the "laurels of victory" and condemn Paul for his cruel destruction of the "cup" that had nourished his growth as an artist. The novel, mostly through the Paul-narrator, carefully chronicles the process by which the mystical "anthropomorphism" of Miriam and her mother finds its way into Paul's painting. Under the "spell" of Mrs Leivers and Miriam ("Miriam was her mother's daughter"), his appreciation of everything took on an "intensified meaning". While Paul fears that Miriam's religious intensity "cut [her] off from ordinary life", she and her mother teach him "to sift the vital fact from an experience" (179). He could be"perfectly happy" with his mother at the seaside, but cannot explain to her what he wrote in the "long letters to Mrs Leivers about the shore and the sea. And he brought back his beloved sketches of the flat Lincoln coast, anxious for [the Leiverses] to see" (179). With his mother, Paul's art was necessarily materialistic. His works, or, more importantly, the prizes awarded them, were the tangible proof that he was realizing his "childish aim" to provide "her life's fulfilment". "It was not his art Mrs Morel cared about, it was himself, and his achievement. But Mrs Leivers, and her children, were almost his disciples. They kindled him, and made him glow to his work, whereas his mother's influence was to make him quietly determined, patient, dogged, unwearied" (179-80). Gertrude's "living warmth" inspires his "best things", but Miriam provides the pentecostal light of artistic consciousness:

> He was conscious only when stimulated. A sketch finished, he always wanted to take it to Miriam. Then he was stimulated into knowledge of the work he had produced unconsciously. In contact with Miriam, he gained insight, his vision went deeper. From his mother he drew the life warmth, the strength to produce; Miriam urged this warmth into intensity like a white light. (190)

In smashing his cup after he has drunk his fill, Paul shows himself particularly ungrateful to Miriam his Virgin Muse, the vessel in which he learned to transform nature into the spiritual stuff of art. In Eric

Neumann's Jungian terms, Miriam's essential symbol is the vessel; [59] her place in the Schema of the Great Mother lies along the "pole of inspiration", "the locus of the divine virgins and the Muses;"[60] her principal task is to rekindle the matriarchal consciousness which allows the creative male to "transform nature into a higher, spiritual principle".[61] It would be unfair to Lawrence to reduce the novel to yet another theory, but Miriam's true "Annunciation"[62] does seem to anticipate elements of Jung's archetype. Miriam's "intense white light" kindles in Paul the creative flame of an artistic Holy Spirit, with which Paul, in turn, fertilizes Miriam's womb, where the fruit of Paul's creative powers ("his imaginations") is born.

> She looked up at him with her dark eyes one flame of love. He laughed uncomfortably Then he began to talk about the design. There was for him the most intense pleasure in talking about his work to Miriam. All his passion, all his wild blood, went into this intercourse with her, when he talked and conceived his work. She brought forth to him his imaginations. She did not understand, any more than a woman understands when she conceives a child in her womb. But this was life for her, and for him.(241)[63]

Diane Bonds has already discovered in this and similar passages Paul's need to sublimate sexual passion with "the fecundity of speech", to protect Miriam's virginity by using "verbal intercourse . . . to prevent intimacy".[64] Neumann's schema suggests a reason other than sexual confusion for Paul's ploy, another motive for hating Miriam once he has

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[59]Eric Neumann, *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955, 1963), 39.

[60]Neumann, 80.

[61]Neumann, 286.

[62]Lawrence's italics, as well as the qualifying "as at", suggest some authorial irony when, "Quivering as at some 'Annunciation'", Miriam "knew she must love" Paul (201). The implication seems to be that the Miriam-narrator self-consciously draws the allusive comparison to give a religious significance to Paul's birth as her Christ-like lover.

[63]A few years later, Joyce would use the Annunciation allusion for the metaphor of artistic creation in his *Künstlerroman, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* The tone is more playful, but the analogy is born while Stephen is struggling with a similar body-soul dichotomy with his virginal muse, Emma Clery: "O! in the virgin womb of the imagination the word was made flesh. Gabriel the seraph had come to the virgin's chamber. An afterglow deepened within his spirit, whence the white flame had passed, deepening to a rose and ardent light" (206).

[64]Bonds, 143.

"defiled" her: to destroy Miriam's virginity would be to displace her from the locus of the muse, would spell the destruction of her spiritual transformational powers. If Paul believes "*all*" his passion and "*all*" his wild blood are necessary for artistic conception, the unspoken implication--an unconscious one--is that any passion or wild blood invested in sexual intercourse might enervate his "imaginations".

Admittedly, most of the support for this theory rests on Paul's own testimony to Miriam's powers as muse and the attendant productivity while he is with her, with the falling off of that productivity when he goes to Clara. Might this not provide dramatic suggestion for Paul's inability to mix spiritual artistic passion simultaneously with "blood" physical passion? Granted Paul isn't addressing his "work" as an artist in the following scene, but he clearly finds that Clara's passion troubles even the production of spiral hose.

> And she was mad with desire of him. She could not see him without touching him. In the factory, as he talked to her about spiral hose, she ran her hand secretly along his side and over his hips. . . . He felt as if she were helpless, almost a burden to him, and it irritated him.
>
> "But what do you always want to be kissing and embracing for?" he said. "Surely there's a time for everything."
>
> She looked at him and the hate came into her eyes.
>
> "*Do* I always want to be kissing you?" she said.
>
> "Always! Even if I come to ask you about the work. I don't want anything to do with love when I'm at work. Work's work--" (399).

One can only speculate if conclusions abstracted more than seven years later derived from *Sons and Lovers.* In his analysis of the conflict between Nathaniel Hawthorne's Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne, Lawrence might retroactively shed some light on the conflict between his own Puritan couple. Just as the "blood *hates* being known by the mind",

> the mind and spiritual consciousness of man simply *hates* the dark-potency of blood acts; hates the genuine dark sensual orgasms, which do, for the time being, actually obliterate the mind and the spiritual consciousness, plunge them in a suffocating flood of darkness.
>
> You can't get away from this . . . .

> We are all of us conscious in both ways. And the two ways are antagonistic in us.
> They will always remain so.
> That is our cross.[65]

Unfortunately for Miriam, the cross is one Paul leaves her to bear.

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3. Vengeful Christs

Nearly a dozen years after the publication of *La Porte étroite,* Gide provides what might be an autobiographical clue to the deaths of his two heroines, Marceline and Alissa. The confession seems to echo the narrator's disturbing explanation of Paul's "sacrifice"--"He seemed to hate her doll so intensely, because he had broken it" (83). In a desultory exploration of his sexual awakening, Gide recalls the principal causes of his adolescent sexual excitement. In addition to shrill sweet sounds and profusions of colours, Gide lists,

> l'idée de l'urgence de quelque acte important, que je devrais faire, sur lequel on compte, qu'on attend de moi, que je ne fais pas, qu'au lieu d'accomplir, j'imagine; et, c'était aussi, toute voisine, l'idée de saccage, sous forme d'un jouet aimé que je détériorais: au demeurant nul désir réel, nulle recherche de contact. N'y entend rien qui s'en étonne . . . .[66]

If Gide means that the close relationship ("toute voisine") is one between his sense of obligation and the sadistic destruction of a beloved icon, perhaps Lawrence would not be at all surprised. Without straining the parallel, arguably Jérôme and Paul carry a similar fetish into adulthood, where the surrogate-Madonnas connected with the idea of maternal obligation become the "sacrificed" dolls, the scapegoats for possessive mothers who would smother their "delicate" sons.

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[65]"Hawthorne and *The Scarlet Letter*", *Selected Literary Criticism,* ed. Anthony Beal (London: Mercury Press, 1961), 349.

[66]*Si le grain,* 60.

Gide and Lawrence construct Alissa and Miriam from types that would know the Marian postures by a sort of cultural instinct. Both authors agree, however, that their heroines take on the Mater-Dolorosa role more at the behest of their male lovers than by their own volition. To satisfy his own needs to be the tearful romantic and suffering Christ, Jérôme freezes Alissa into the "interrogative" and sad-eyed Madonna of the Pietà. Alissa turns her face increasingly toward the next world because the Jérôme obsessed with the air of mourning offers her little satisfaction in this one. Gide's text, through drama and Alissa's journal, portrays a Madonna who, far from wishing to coddle and dominate a lachrymose child, hopes a "manly" Jérôme will force her door and give direction to their relationship.

The deflected matricide seems even less just in Miriam's case. Aside from the romantic desire of the fourteen-year-old girl to play the nurse to her new saviour--"Then he was so ill, and she felt he would be weak. Then she would be stronger than he"(174).--Miriam remains, if anything, too humble before her Christ. Far from wanting to restrict Paul to the confines of the Midlands, Miriam hopes he will show *her* the way to the larger world--"Why should I, because I'm a girl, be kept at home and not allowed to do anything?" (185). Without Miriam's pentecostal inspiration as Muse, Paul would not have developed as an artist, the implied messianic task of Lawrence's *Künstlerroman*. Paul abandons Miriam at the end as if she had, like Gertrude, attempted to seduce him toward death, when in fact she had stimulated the art that provides the essential meaning for his life.

The oxymoronic passionate-virginity inspired by the Madonna must be considered normal for any sensitive Christian girl; and Gide and Lawrence agree that their Puritan heroes are more to blame than their heroines for making a "monster" of the flesh. The "normal" Christian male already pulls his Virgin Mary between his demands for renunciation and sexual fulfilment; Gide and Lawrence suggest their sexually "abnormal" heroes confuse their Madonnas further. Assuming Jérôme's desires to be similar to her own, Alissa interprets his sexual insensitivity as heroic renunciation. In the world of Christian antitheses, Alissa believes she becomes, like Lucile, the Old Eve the instant she fails as the New. One conclusion of this study is that perhaps Paul, too, suffers

from similar antithetical Christian attitudes, destroying an Old Eve of his own making. With his adolescent sexual awakening troubled by the puritan separation of body and soul, the perceived need to cast Miriam in the image of his own "Virgin Mother", and his association of the sexual act with the brutal desecration of his father's generation, Paul pulls Miriam more than the two ways suggested in the martyrdom of Catherine of Alexandria. In his Hardy essay, Lawrence blames Christianity for "stamping out" the "primeval Female Principle";[67] in *Sons and Lovers*, he accuses Paul of "trampling" upon it. Again, it seems that a balanced reading suggests that Lawrence's analysis of the problem between Paul and Miriam, even in its language and tone, finds much to agree with in Jessie Chambers's reading of the struggle between her and a young Lawrence.

> My instinct was to achieve some measure of understanding of life, not to evade it. Neither could I believe in his division of love into the spiritual and physical. It seemed to me entirely mistaken. For divided in his manner 'physical love' became an insult, and spiritual love an abstraction. I felt each was equally unreal.[68]
>
> I could not help feeling that the whole question of sex had for him the fascination of horror,[69] and also that in his repudiation of any possibility of a sex relationship between us he felt that he paid me a deep and subtle compliment. I was sure there was something fundamentally false in this attitude, because of my inescapable conviction that one must accept life as a whole.[70]

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[67] "Hardy", 67.
[68] "*E. T*"., 139.
[69] John Worthen's revelations in chapter VI, "Spirit Love", *D. H. L.: The Early Years*, suggest Chambers is right. See footnote 75 above.
[70] "*E.T*"., 153.

II. The Maiden: "A Fate Worse Than Death"

Overview

> *Nathaniel Hawthorne writes romance.*
>
> *And what's romance? Usually, a nice little tale where you have everything As You Like It, where rain never wets your jacket and gnats never bite your nose and it's always daisy time. As You Like It and Forest Lovers, etc. Morte D'Arthur.*[1]
>
> --"Nathaniel Hawthorne and *The Scarlet Letter*"

Lawrence's playful definition serves well our present endeavour; for while it is neither necessary here nor possible to define a literary mode that extends chronologically from the twelfth century to the twentieth, artistically from a Chateaubriand to a Goethe, certain common elements of the cultural code transmitted to the readers of Romance must be identified. And, since Miriam, Alissa, Jérôme, and Paul all look to Romance from this side of the thresholds to both adulthood and the modern age, they understandably find appealing its unambiguous moral world and promise of eternal summer. The first element, then, of that code to be applied here is its reductive moral perspective. Not far from Lawrence's definition stands Northrop Frye's:

> Romance avoids the ambiguities of ordinary life, where everything is a mixture of good or bad, and where it is difficult to take sides or believe that people are consistent patterns of virtue or vice. . . .
>
> The characterization of Romance is really a feature of its mental landscape. Its heroes and villains exist primarily to symbolize a contrast between two worlds, one above the level of ordinary existence, the other below it. There is, first, a world associated with happiness, security, and peace; the emphasis is often thrown on childhood or on an "innocent" or pre-genital period of youth, and the images of those are spring and summer, flowers and sunshine. I shall call this world the idyllic world. The

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[1]*D. H. L., Selected Literary Criticism*, 347.

> other is a world of exciting adventures but adventures which involve separation, loneliness, humiliation, pain, and the threat of more pain. . . .[2]

The other elements of the code that concern us here all centre on the roles Romance assigns the young knight and maiden during this pre-genital spring, and the reasons why the woman's task involves far too little of the adventure and far too much of the pain. Here it is necessary to look to Louise Vidas's focus in her study of the secular quest in Hardy and Lawrence. In the

> Western-Christian secular romance quest . . . the hero [is] motivated by a spiritual lady of the Beatrice-Sophia type. Characteristic of the secular romance are the religious aura which permeates the love relationship and the fact that the love quest is a means for the hero's attainment of a state of higher selfhood.[3]

The specific elements of the code that are most germane here lie in the *indicible* of implication; for while the knight pretends to elevate the maiden as the spiritual muse to serve as the symbolic object of his higher quest, he is in fact assigning her to a sterile passivity that offers suffering as her only heroic "act", a passivity which denies her the chance to embark on a quest for *her* "selfhood". The female reader of Romance will find implied here, too, the code's specific instructions on how she should view her sexuality. Once the advent of sensual desire signals the end of the pregenital summer, renunciation of the sensual self becomes the only way to continue in her role as the disembodied spiritual muse. According to the polarities of Romance, the maiden has to choose between the "heroism" of chastity or the "shame" of sexual submission. To choose the latter would be to become the *femme fatale,* whose task it is to divert the hero from his sacred quest. Thus the Romance which promises to be the vehicle of escape from a mundane existence becomes, ironically, a trap in which the intensity of the maiden's pain becomes the hallmark of her success, the final separation of the convent or death the only honourable "release".

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[2]Frye, *The Secular Scripture,* 50, 53.

[3]Louise W. Vidas, "The Single Green Light and the Splendid and Terrible Spectrum: A Study of the Secular Romance Quest in the Novels of Thomas Hardy and D. H. Lawrence", *Dissertations Abstracts International* 34 (1973): 1298A-99A, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, 14.

If it is Romance's "religious aura" that attracts the sensitive Alissas and Miriams to the "religion of love", surely reading is the sacrament which binds them to this secular Church. And just as the followers of Christianity are encouraged to emulate the life of Christ, the readers find in the discourse of Romance models who provide them with means and ends, the gestures, language and emotions that lead inexorably toward the consummation of specific desires. Thus the aspiring Maiden forfeits, again, her own chance for identity to a maiden-icon created by the authors of Romance, just as "Don Quixote has surrendered to Amadis the individual's fundamental prerogative; he no longer chooses the objects of his own desire--Amadis must choose for him".[4] To illustrate the influence of chivalric literature upon the hero of Cervantes's burlesque of Romance, René Girard offers the triangle of desire as his principal metaphor. Once Don Quixote has elected Garcia de Montalvo's hero Amadis de Gaul as the ideal knight, he "pursues objects which are determined for him by [his] model of chivalry", which Girard calls the "*mediator* of desire".

> In most works of fiction, the characters have desires which are simpler than Don Quixote's. There is no mediator there is only the subject and the object. When the "nature" of the object inspiring the passion is not sufficient to account for the desire, one must turn to the impassioned subject. Either his "psychology" is examined or his "liberty" invoked. But desire is always spontaneous. It can always be portrayed by a simple straight line which joins subject and object.
>
> The straight line is present in the desire of Don Quixote, but it is not essential. The mediator is there, above that line, radiating toward both the subject and the object. The spatial metaphor which expresses this triple relationship is obviously the triangle. The barber's basin or Master Peter's puppets replace the windmills; but Amadis is always present.[5]

Always present for Miriam are the maidens of Sir Walter Scott, who encourage her virginity as vigorously as does the Madonna icon. Already denied the male prerogative to venture beyond the confines of

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[4]René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel:Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), 1.

[5]Girard, 2.

home, Miriam looks to Paul as her rescuing knight. But Paul, motivated by both his sexual insecurity and his artistic aspirations, perceptively freezes her as the icon of the spiritual muse. And when Paul's incipient sensuality suddenly threatens her spiritual task, Miriam finds herself caught in Romance's double bind. Continued renunciation will drive him away, yet the polarities of Romance's moral code suggest Paul will abandon her, too, if she "falls" from the pedestal on which he has placed her. Both solutions bring Miriam the "pain" promised by the code; neither awards her the knight's love.

Always present for Alissa are Beatrice and the other spiritual guides in the library Jérôme has assembled for her. Again the knight's sexual insecurity energises his need for the spiritual icon, though in Jérôme's case the sensual lack is such that he will never demand that Alissa plays simultaneously the roles of spiritual muse and *femme fatale*. Still, since she has no way of knowing that Jérôme does not experience the same sort of sensual desire suggested increasingly in her letters, Alissa can only assume that his moral strength outstrips her own. All too aware that Lucile has left in her the seed of the *femme fatale*, Alissa redoubles the ascetic rigour which Jérôme and his library had originally prescribed for her.

In emphasizing that their protagonists are dangerously confused by "romantic assumptions about reality", Gide's and Lawrence's novels conform to Frye's definition of "parody romance".[6] And in demonstrating how their "heroes" destroy their "heroines" by imposing upon them the ideal constructed by the code of Romance, both Gide and Lawrence find they must direct their parodies toward the darker stuff of tragedy. Arguably it is in redefining the "quest" for self-identity that the authors manifest most clearly their sympathy for their female protagonists; for Alissa and Miriam, more than their male lovers, begin to suspect that the authentic self is found not through Romance's facile polarization of the spiritual and the sensual, but in the more difficult union of body and soul, the very union Gide and Lawrence hope to encourage in all their work.

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[6]*The Secular Scripture*, 39.

C. S. Lewis and Marina Warner chronicle the operation whereby Christian mythmakers conflated the images of Madonna and Maiden, the codes of Christianity and Romance. The campaign proved so successful that Romantic sexual indulgence soon gave way to Romantic renunciation, adulterous love to marital fidelity; and in an ironic cultural alliance, troubadour and priest encouraged in their young female followers the same virtues of chastity, suffering, and passivity.

Lewis finds it more likely that "the colouring of certain hymns to the Virgin has been borrowed from the love poetry", than it is "that the quasi-religious tone of medieval love poetry has been transferred from the worship of the Blessed Virgin".[7] Certainly the latter transference would have seemed most sacrilegious to Fathers of the Church who saw the Troubadours' adulterous "religion of love"[8] as a dangerous cultural threat. Lewis explains, "this erotic religion arises as a rival or a parody of the real religion and emphasizes the antagonism of the two ideals".[9]

Warner believes similarly that the "accelerated devotion to Our Lady" and the "idealization of woman" by the Provençal poets" were two independent and disparate social currents". The Virgin becomes causally related with Courtly love only in the thirteenth century, when "the two currents were reconciled . . . by one of the church's most successful intellectual operations, whereby the pagan joy of the Troubadours and their heirs was transmuted into the typical Christian quest for the other world through denial of the pleasures in this".[10] Warner cites aristocratic elitism as the common denominator which allowed the improbable marriage: in her posture as "Queen of Heaven" in the court of Christ, "the Virgin was able to assume so much of the character and functions of the original beloved of Languedoc poetry and to rob it and

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[7]C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936, 1959), 8.

[8]Lewis, 2. "The sentiment [of Troubadour poetry], of course, is love, but love of a highly specialized sort, whose characteristics may be enumerated as Humility, Courtesy, Adultery, and the Religion of Love".

[9]Lewis, 45.

[10]Warner, 134.

many of its descendants of its dangerous hedonism and permissiveness".[11]

For the first hundred years of courtly Romance, the Troubadours "celebrated human love for its powers to ennoble man and elevate his soul. Passion and reason. . . were reconciled in the camp of civilization, by directing desire and love at an object of sublime and moral beauty; the body and soul were not locked in mortal combat".[12] But Christian teachers, for whom "some evil element was present in every concrete instance of [the sexual] act since the fall", imparted to their charges "that all love--at least all such passionate and exalted devotion as a courtly poet thought worthy of the name--was more or less wicked".[13] By the early thirteenth century, Warner believes, "lyric poets no longer sang of the joy or agony of physical love, but accepted without demur the promise that their lady was worthy of their love precisely because she was too pure to reciprocate it".[14]

In the transition from the celebration of sensual joy to the celebration of chastity, the suffering concomitant with the vicissitudes of any love affair honed itself exclusively on renunciation.[15] According to Warner, the introduction of the ascetic ideal into Provençal poetry created a particular sentiment that was a travesty of the original wanton temper of the Troubadours but was to prevail as the very fibre of lyric verse".[16] Thus the cease fire was broken, "thus the quarrel between the body and soul was reestablished"; and thus, in the terms of this study, the Maiden and Madonna icons, along with the Martyr icon to be

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[11]Warner, 135.

[12]Warner, 136.

[13]Lewis, 14.

[14]Warner, 137.

[15]Warner explains: "Because the prevailing accent of the troubadour lyric is suffering and because the bliss of union that the poet seeks is yearned for and not enjoyed, it has been widely assumed that the love the Provençaux celebrated was chaste. . . . But the early poetry of the Languedoc does not celebrate chastity for its own sake and it needs only the first-hand experience of a love affair for anyone to understand that yearning, pain, and frustration do not necessarily cease with the attainment of the beloved object, but that indeed possession itself can exacerbate the fear of loss, the sensitivity to pain, and set the human heart in an anguished and erratic motion . . . all of which the early Troubadours chronicled with melancholy awareness" (136-7).

[16]Warner, 137.

discussed in the following chapter, joined voices to encourage Miriams and Alissas in their virginity, suffering, and passivity.

Chapter Three: Miriam as Maiden

> *Dear Adelaida, she is irreproachable. In every age, in every clime, she is dear, at any rate to the masculine soul, this soft, tear-blenched, blond, ill-used thing. She must be ill-used and unfortunate. Dear Gretchen, dear Desdemona, dear Iphigenia, dear Dame aux Camélias, dear Lucy of Lammermoor, dear Mary Magdalene, dear, pathetic, unfortunate soul, in all ages and lands, how we love you. In the theatre she blossoms forth, she is the lily of the stage. Young and inexperienced as I am, I have broken my heart over her several times . . . Each new time I hear her voice, with its faint clang of tears, my heart grows big and hot, and my bones melt. I detest her, but it is no good. My heart begins to swell like a bud under the plangent rain.*
>
> *--Twilight in Italy*[1]

1. Mrs Morel: "Lynette of High Lineage"

A study of Gertrude's romantic attitudes is necessary to better understand such influences on Miriam, to adumbrate the girl's thoughts on aristocracy, virginity, the role of the maiden, to better see the outlines of Lawrence's "parody-romance". Lawrence never reveals whether Gertrude imbibed her Romance directly through literature or indirectly through the contemporary mythology peddled on the street; but he does suggest she is sufficiently conversant with the code to fashion her dreams accordingly, to manipulate her knights, and to ensure that, once again, Miriam is relegated to secondary iconic status. For, as Louise Vidas points out, even after Gertrude's death, "Paul plays Prince Charming to his mother's corpse" and remains "too faithful" to the first "object-symbol" of his quest for identity to transfer his allegiance to the Maiden in Miriam.[2]

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[1]D. H. Lawrence, *Twilight in Italy / Sea and Sardinia*, ed. Richard Aldington (London: Heron Books, 1968), 71.

[2]Vidas, 162.

The chivalric code offers Gertrude, as it does Miriam, an imaginative escape from a soul-deadening reality, the assurance they are somehow superior to the lesser mortals around them. In his article on Malory's *Gareth and Lynette* (a story included in Tennyson's *Idylls*), Joseph Ruff's first two "stages" of knighthood describe well Gertrude's perception of her relationship with William and Paul. The first stage demands "a man who can be a knight must come from aristocratic blood, for that is where the seeds of noblesse originate. A man's origins may be unknown, but his high lineage will be revealed by his deeds".[3] The second stage, the requisite "apprenticeship as a squire under the instruction of a mentor", reinforces this elitist attitude since, according to Ramon Lull's thirteenth-century *The Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry*, the mentors, whether they be crusty knight or, as in Gareth's case, courtly lady, invariably inculcate "scorn for both ignorance and poverty".[4] Northrop Frye widens the application of such elitism to even "naive romance", the folk tales that allow Gertrude and Miriam to believe themselves hidden princesses. "One very obvious feature of Romance is its pervasive social snobbery. Naive Romance gives us patterns of aristocratic courage and courtesy, and much of it adopts a 'blood will tell' convention, the association of moral virtue and social rank implied in the word 'noble'".[5]

Gertrude knows the code sufficiently to be of a mind with Lull's mentors--which means, of course, that the working-class Morel never stands a chance with this "lady", and is soon cast aside for the sons whose nobility sprang from Gertrude's own aristocratic blood. She takes on the role of preceptor herself to direct William and Paul in the third and final stage of knighthood--"the trials and . . . deeds . . . [that] prove him worthy of his blood line and of the status of knighthood".[6] And this is where Lawrence's "parody-romance" takes a tragic turn: Gertrude's knights ascend not to a Camelot of high ideals, but to a vacuous and deadly industrial "middle class".

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[3]Joseph Ruff, "Malory's Gareth and Fifteenth-Century Chivalry", *Chivalric Literature*, Larry Benson & John Leyerle, 106.

[4]Ruff, 106, cites his reference as Ramon Lull, trans. & ed. William Caxton (New York: Kraus, 1971).

[5]*The Secular Scripture*, 161.

[6]Ruff, 106.

In Lawrence's parody, the disguised princess's vision cannot transcend that of the middle class that bore her; yet Gertrude would see both herself and her sons in Gareth, the young prince who disguises himself as a kitchen knave in Arthur's hall. Gertrude scorns working-class ignorance and poverty with all the intensity of Lady Lynette, who "nipt her slender nose/ With petulant thumb and finger"[7] when she first meets her charge. "Mrs Morel came of a good old burgher family, famous independents who had fought with Colonel Hutchinson, and who remained stout Congregationalists;"(15) and, "having an end house, she enjoyed a kind of aristocracy among the other women of the 'between' houses" (10). The disguised princess loathed "the struggle with poverty and ugliness and meanness" (13).

Gertrude's romantic visions seem inspired as much by the folk tale as they are by the Arthurian cycle. "Cinderella" and "Sleeping Beauty", or other analogous "naive romances", inform the Bestwood maiden who, when "looking ahead, the prospect of her life made her feel as if she were buried alive".

> "What have *I* to do with it!" she said to herself. "What have I to do with all this. . . . I wait," Mrs Morel said to herself. "I wait, and what I wait for can never come." (14)

Only her sons know her true identity, so only they have it in their power to awaken the sleeping princess. William believes that "no other woman looked such a lady as she did" (12). Paul was hurt keenly by the "feeling about her, that she had never had her life's fulfilment: and his own incapability to make up to her hurt him with a sense of impotence, yet made him patiently dogged inside. It was his childish aim" (91). But still she must wait, believing herself imprisoned by the brutish Morel, until her champions have finished the first two stages of their training, the education that will ensure their hatred for their father and the class which produced him.

Lawrence's initial ironic twist in his parody-romance is that Gertrude, in her attempts to escape the poverty that so "galled" her father, initially mistakes her warden for her liberating knight. Having "never been 'thee'd' and 'thou'd' before" (19), she romantically mistakes the miner's toil for knightly deeds: Morel, "toiling below earth and coming up at evening",

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[7]Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *Idylls of the King* (New York: Airmont, 1969), 49.

"seemed to her noble. He risked his life daily, and with gaiety. She looked at him, with a touch of appeal in her pure humility" (19). But the Maiden's characteristic "pure humility" in the face of her knight turns quickly to unadulterated arrogance when she learns he is penniless. "Something in her proud, honorable soul had crystalised out hard as rock" (21); and whereas the Morel she believed to be noble had made her immune to his "mother and sisters [who] were apt to sneer at her lady-like ways" (19), no champion now protects her from the lesser souls around her: "The women did not spare her, at first; for she was superior, though she could not help it" (22). Now that her false champion has been exposed as the essence of the brutishness from which she had hoped to escape, the sleeping princess must look elsewhere for her redemptive knight.

> [William] was a beautiful child, with dark gold ringlets, and dark blue eyes which changed gradually to a clear grey. His mother loved him passionately. He came just when her own bitterness of disillusion was hardest to bear; when her faith in life was shaken. . . . She turned to the child, she turned from the father. (22)

"There began a battle between the husband and wife, a fearful, bloody battle that ended only with the death of one" (22). And since Gertrude, like Sir Walter Scott's maidens, is physically too weak "to combat in her own behalf",[8] Lawrence's parody provides a chivalric twist to the Oedipal father-son rivalry, allowing William to joust with Morel physically while Gertrude destroys him psychologically. "The child had only to give a little trouble, when the man began to bully. A little more, and the hard hands of the collier hit the baby" (23). As if he sensed that in William's golden curls lay the key to his rival's superior nobility (when, in fact, he probably fears more that they undermined the child's masculinity), Morel "cropped [him] like a sheep" (23). "Morel had kicked William, and the mother would never forgive him" (49). Until William became a man, one who could respond to the challenges both to his person and to his mother's honour, she bides her time by teaching her squire to detest what she perceives to be his father's ignorance and brutishness. "In seeking to make [Morel] nobler than he could be, she destroyed him" (25); and when he failed as a knight, "was often a poltroon, sometimes a knave, she wielded the lash unmercifully" (25). William soon

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[8]Sir Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe*, Waverley, XVII, 263.

"hated him, with a boy's hatred for false sentiment and for the stupid treatment of his mother" (48).

"Meanwhile William grew bigger and stronger and more active" (64), though Gertrude still needs to defend him against Morel's anger over the torn-collar incident: "Only dare, milord, to lay a finger on that child. You'll regret it for ever" (68). But more and more, William's actions testify to both the efficacy of her instruction and his ability to be her knight. Already as a young boy, this warrior, "with a touch of the Dane or Norwegian about him" had brought her from the exotic "wakes" tributes appropriately symbolic of maternal fertility and romantic virginity--"He pulled from his pocket two egg-cups,with pink moss-roses on them. . . . 'I got these two in two goes'. . . . She knew he wanted them for her" (11-2). At the threshold of adolescence, William's tokens of victory are those of the chivalric initiate, one whose anvil rings both the appropriate Oedipal note--the female passive responding to the masculine hammer[9]--and the chivalric, recalling Malory's "anvil of steel" from which Arthur pulled Excalibur: "All the things that men do--the decent things--William did. He could run like the wind. When he was twelve he won a first prize in a race: an inkstand of glass, shaped like an anvil . . . . He flew home with his anvil, breathless, with a 'Look, mother!' That was the first real tribute to herself. She took it like a queen" (70) By early manhood, William is prepared to throw the gauntlet in the defence of his lady. Paul, who is still in the incipient stages of his own training,

> never forgot coming home . . . one Monday evening and finding his mother with her eye swollen and discoloured, his father standing on the hearthrug, feet astride, his head down, and William, just home from work, glaring at his father. . . .
>
> William was white to the lips, and his fists were clenched. . . . "You coward, you daren't do it when I was in". . . . "Dossn't I?, he shouted. "Dossn't I? Ha'e much more o' thy chelp, my young jockey, an' I'll rattle my fist about thee". . . .
>
> Morel crouched at the knees and showed his fist in an ugly almost beast-like fashion. William was white with rage.
>
> "Will yer!" he said, quiet and intense, "it'ud be the last time, though". (83)

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[9]*Dictionary of Symbols*, ed. Ad de Vries (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Co., 1974), 16.

Gertrude's knight stands ready to rescue her from what she perceives to be Morel's "beast-like" world, just as Arthur lifted Guinevere from another "land of beasts".[10]

Having proved himself in a domestic joust, the knight now needs to prove himself in the world, take a seat at an ironic round table in an industrial Camelot, while the Maiden waits at home, living vicariously through the champion who spreads her name throughout the land. Cinderella patiently suffers her tasks, Sleeping Beauty contentedly slumbers, confident their knight is about to redeem them: "All day long as she cleaned the house, she thought of him. He was in London: he would do well. Almost, he was like her knight who wore *her* favour in the battle" (103). Once she has sent Paul into the world, Mrs Morel "could think of two places, great centres of industry, and feel that she had put a man into each of them, that these men would work out what *she* wanted; they were derived from her, they were of her, and their works also would be hers" (127). But as chivalric mentor, the Lady must ensure she imparts the knowledge of a proper chivalric code; that, if she is to shape his behaviour in his first adventures, as does Dame Lynette with Gareth,[11] both the behaviour and adventures must be ennobling. Confident that risking life daily in the pit leads to brutishness rather than nobleness, Gertrude unwittingly sends William to a wasteland. In seeking to make her first knight "nobler than he could be, she destroyed him" (25); in sending her second knight to the land of Mammon, she destroys another.

Years later, in *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* Lawrence mitigates the didactic nature of his anti-industrial sermon by placing it in the attractively rustic mouth of Mellors,[12] a Morel analogue fortunate enough to live in nature rather than in the pit. In *Sons and Lovers,* the lesson is couched in the experiences of Paul and William. Lawrence keeps the romance-parody surrounding Paul on the lighter plane of comedy, probably because, unlike William, Paul has his art to offer him a way to rise above both pit and centre of industry: his "wistful" plaint that he is "already a prisoner of

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[10] *Idylls,* 13.

[11] Ruff, 107, 109.

[12] *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* 123. "The fault lay there, out there, in those evil electric lights and diabolical rattlings of engines. There, in the world of the mechanical greedy, greedy mechanism and mechanized greed, sparkling with lights and gushing hot metal and roaring with traffic, there lay the vast evil thing, ready to destroy whatever did not conform".

industrialism" seems so much Byronic self-indulgence. Lawrence seems to be poking fun at the Paul-narrator who sees himself "venture under the archway, as into the jaws of the dragon" of "Thomas Jordan and Son" (118-19); who, after his introduction to the world of "Surgical Appliances", looks up through the "dark pass" of Nottingham's buildings to see "the Castle on its bluff of brown, green-bushed rock, in a positive miracle of delicate sunshine" (124).

In William's story, the parodic turns to the tragic in the waste of William's life. Since Gertrude's vision of a return to her proper social position extends only as far as the lace-market--"her grandfather had gone bankrupt at a time when so many lace-manufacturers were ruined in Nottingham" (15)--she can hardly be faulted for the meanness of her dreams. The sources of her pride in her "fiery" athlete are less than chivalric: "She was very proud of her son. He went to the night-school, so that by the the time he was sixteen he was the best short-hand clerk and book-keeper on the place, except one" (70). Her sole criterion for estimating the measure of his success is the same she uses later to judge the quality of Paul's paintings. "In his new place he had thirty shillings a week instead of eighteen. This was indeed a rise. His mother and his father were brimmed up with pride. Everyone praised William. It seemed he was going to get on rapidly" (78). Gertrude remains, of course, highly principled, but William quickly perceives that her mercenary standard is that which applies best to his new world. The young man who "got a place in London, at a hundred and twenty a year" (78), must have wondered why her own implied criterion impresses her so little when applied to his social life: "'This girl's father,' said William, 'is as rich as Croesus'" (80).

The "flower-like ladies" who "would come in pursuit of her errant swain" (73) and the "quick current" of William's new life trouble Gertrude, who seems to ignore that these are part and parcel of "getting on" in the centres of interest. Lily, the "cut bloom" who enthralls her son, must seem the archetypal temptress, the *femme fatale* whose embrace made the "quest fade" in Percivale's heart.[13] It would seem, then, that William has transgressed the chivalric code, according to which, as Ruff explains, "the most serious error a knight can make is knowingly to betray the high order of chivalry by

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[13]*Idylls*, 229.

disloyalty to his lady or lord".[14] But in Lawrence's parody, William has followed his mentor's instructions exactly--*femme fatale* and quest are one, Gertrude's punishment for not having recognized the speciousness of her Grail. Louisa Lily Denys Western seems the Lily, the symbol of Christian resurrection or of Gertrude's and Miriam's virginity; in fact, nothing lies behind the "quite naked" photograph--"She's always being photographed" (126)--save the empty material promise of the new "Western" values. William initially takes her for a romantic "Gypsy", but soon discovers "she's not serious--and she can't think" (146). Still, he cannot help himself since the other modern knights "were running thick and fast" after her (116). And William is not alone: "The three children sat round in silence and admiration. Miss Western was the princess" (145); Morel, "watching the gallant pair [William and Gyp] go, felt he was the father of princes and princesses" (147). Even Paul, the knight in training, "really *did* admire 'Gypsy' whole-heartedly" (147). Gertrude "scarcely forgave the boy for the adulation with which he treated the girl", suggesting that the mentor still ignores that she had been the one to first encourage her young charge in the pursuit of Miss Western. Graham Holderness explains her unwitting culpability in the terms of socio-economic history. He finds that the novel "dramatises a critique of the ideology" of "'social mobility' through education and moral improvement.

> The mother, in an effort to realise her vision of moral improvement, tries to push her sons into the middle class. In fact, however, she pushes them into isolation, separateness, individuality. The process destroys William and leads Paul into a position of isolated singleness where he is wholly dependent on his mother. . . . Outside the working-class community there is nothing--a vacuum.[15]

Rather than the fiery athlete who "won first prize in a race", Paul is the sensitive scholar who "won a prize in a competition in a child's paper" (87), a lad whose spiritual nature makes him even less suited than William for a material wasteland. Gertrude thinks of him as "my lamb", a suggestion that his heroism, as will be discussed later, aligns itself more closely with the spirituality of a Christ than with the physicality of a knight. Having had two

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[14]Ruff, 107.

[15]Graham Holderness, *D. H. Lawrence: History, Ideology, and Fiction* (London: Gill and Macmillan, 1957), 147.

other knights before him,[16] Paul struggles hardest for the favour of his lady: "His soul seemed always attentive to her" (82). "All the children, but particularly Paul, were peculiarly *against* their father" (83). "Paul hated his father. As a boy, he had a fervent private religion. 'Make him stop drinking,' he prayed every night. 'Lord, let my father die,' he prayed very often" (85). When William and Morel are about to fight, "Paul hoped they would" (83). But William's conquest constitutes only a partial victory for Paul, since he "was unconsciously jealous of his brother, and William was jealous of him" (93).

"When William went to Nottingham, and was not so much at home, the mother made a companion of Paul" (93); when he went to London, Paul declares "I'm the man of the house now" (113); and while he cannot match William's "tribute" of the anvil, he "would rather die" than disappoint her. Paul's tribute speaks as much to his character as William's does to his. "He always brought her one spray, the best he could find. 'Pretty!' she said, in a curious tone, of a woman accepting a love-token" (93). If Mrs Morel's dream, then, is to have her sons as two knights out in the world to "work out what *she* wanted", Paul is only too happy to accommodate her. He well understands the injustice surrounding his Cinderella, the dormant dreams of the Sleeping Beauty who must "wait and wait". Even as a child, "when she fretted, he understood, and could have no peace. His soul seemed always attentive to her" (82).

Now that Gertrude has lost the first knight who was to have rescued her from a brutish existence, it is understandable that she would vilify any maiden who, like Lily, might undermine her knight's loyalty. What is important here is that Gertrude's charge is born, at least to some degree, from the formulaic patterns of Romance; that any woman who would dare undermine her dream to have her sons "work out what *she* wanted" (127), to quest "only for her" (70), would become the *femme fatale* :

> Wherever he went, she felt her soul went with him. Whatever he did, she felt her soul stood by him, ready, as it were, to hand him his tools. She could not bear it when he was with Miriam. William was dead. She would fight to keep Paul. (262)

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[16]In folk narrative, the hero is often the third of a trio, whose destiny is different from those of the others.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Lawrence's dramatic irony suggests Gertrude describes only herself in her perception of Miriam as a sort of spiritual vampire who, through the powers of necromancy, "draws", "sucks", "absorbs" her victim's very soul. While she remains a second-rate icon to Paul, Miriam fulfils better than Gertrude the Maiden's task in the Christian Romance quest outlined in Paul's Tennyson and Miriam's Scott. Where Gertrude would urge him toward a material pit more spiritually sterile than Morel's mine, Miriam is the "spiritual lady of the Beatrice-Sophia type", who "motivates her hero "toward self-transcendence".[17]

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2. Cinderellas and Swine-Girls, Rebeccas and Rowenas.

> The girl was romantic in her soul. Everywhere was a Walter Scott heroine being loved by men with helmets or with plumes in their hats. She herself was something of a princess turned into a swine girl, in her own imagination. And she was afraid lest this boy, who nevertheless looked something like a Walter Scott hero, who could paint and speak French, and knew what algebra meant, and who went by train to Nottingham every day, might consider her simply as the swine-girl unable to perceive the princess beneath, so she held aloof.
>
> Her great companion was her mother. They were both brown-eyed and inclined to be mystical, such women as treasure religion inside them, breathe it in their nostrils, and see the whole of life in a mist thereof. So, to Miriam Christ and God made one great figure, which she loved tremblingly and passionately when a tremendous sunset burned out the western sky; and Ediths, and Lucys, and Rowenas, Brian de Bois Guilberts, Rob Roys and Guy Mannerings,[18] rustled the sunny leaves in the morning, or sat in her bedroom, aloft,

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[17]Vidas, 60.

[18]Edith is the heroine of Scott's poem "Lord of the Isles", Lucy of his novel *The Bride of Lammermoor*. Rowena is the chaste maiden, Brian de Bois Guilbert the villain from *Ivan*hoe; Rob Roy and Guy Mannering are the eponymous heroes of two other Waverley novels. Earlier, when Maurice chides Miriam for imagining herself to be 'The Lady of the Lake' (156), the reference is to Ellen, the "Lady" in Scott's poem of the same name.

> alone, when it snowed. That was life to her. For the rest, she drudged in the house.... (173)

This mystical amalgam of Christian and Romantic myths becomes, by default, life to Miriam. Since she is denied, like Gertrude, the male prerogative to undertake her own quest, Miriam, too, must look to a male champion to fulfil her desires. Impatient with the feckless John Fields who acquiesces to the designs of a "stiff-necked" father, Gertrude rails, "If *I* were a man, nothing would stop me"(16); resentful of her dependence on Paul's learning for even a glimpse of the male world of "doing", Miriam remains understandably ambivalent toward her prince: "Miriam almost fiercely wished she were a man. And yet she hated men, at the same time" (185). In studying the effects of several hundred pages of Scott and the Brothers Grimm on the sensitive adolescent female, Lawrence displays a sensitivity to the vicious circle in which the accident of sex has placed Miriam. Powerless to "do" because she is a woman, she has become powerless to desire spontaneously. Just as the Madonna's life takes on meaning only as a satellite of that of the questing Christ's, the maiden sleeps in Romance's limbo of non-identity until awakened by the saviour-knight, and then only to an existence as a focus of *his* quest for identity. Attempting to escape from the brutish world of her brothers, "the vulgarity of the other choir girls and . . . the common sounding voice of the curate" (173), Miriam relinquishes her own will to the collective desires of "Ediths, and Lucys and Rowenas", Cinderellas and swine-girls. The circle closes upon her, of course, because these maidens' desires have been created, in turn, by male mythmakers for whom the quest for self-identity is an exclusively male endeavour.

Gertrude or Clara replace Miriam's brutish brothers as obstacles, but Scott's and the Grimm's heroines are always there for her, just as "Amadis is always there" for Don Quixote. There, that is, for the reader to see; the heroes and maidens whose passion, in fact, "defines a desire *according to Another*", "borrow their desires from the other in a movement which is so fundamental and primitive that they completely confuse it with the will to be oneself".[19] The heroes and maidens always want to convince themselves that their "desire is written into the nature of things".[20] Here Girard seems to attest to the validity of Barthes's concern that the very principle of "myth" is the specious transformation of history into "nature". In truth, Barthes holds, "la

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[19]Girard., 4.
[20]Ibid., 15.

mythologie ne peut avoir qu'un fondement historique, car le mythe est une parole choisie par l'histoire: il ne saurait surgir de la 'nature' des choses".[21] Lawrence sees that the price Miriam must pay for her confusion goes well beyond disenchantment.

In confusing her desire with the "will to be oneself", Miriam mistakes her mediators *for* herself. Alexandre Kojeve, in his "Introduction to the Reading of Hegel", anticipates Girard's insights into this sort of ontological confusion. "The (conscious) Desire of a being is what constitutes that being as 'I' and reveals it as such by moving it to say 'I'. . . . Desire is what transforms Being, revealed by itself in (true) knowledge, into an 'object' revealed to a 'subject' different from the object and 'opposed' to it".[22] If Miriam confuses her desire with those of the Romance Maiden, she remains at two removes from her true "I": firstly, since her desires are not her own, the "I" which is necessarily "formed and revealed"[23] *by* desire must be false; secondly, the desires she inherits from the Romance maidens are, like all myth, untrue, self-serving historical directives posing as nature.

To place her at two removes from true self-identity would set Miriam alongside Don Quixote; in fact, the ontological patterns of Romance put her at a further disadvantage. Vidas, in a study that emphasizes "the "idealist-spiritualist aspects" rather than the "sensualist" in Lawrence, explains that Paul's quest, like those of all other heroes in Western secular Romance, "is a means for the hero's attainment of a state of higher selfhood".[24] Miriam, like any spiritual muse, cannot hope to find her "I" when her models and Paul reduce her to a symbolic "point of reference" for the external object in which the hero must find himself. "Paul is a developing consciousness attempting to gain a symbolic slice of divinity, a transcendence of self, through his relationship with Miriam".[25] Struggling as he does with "the search for higher consciousness and individuality", Paul can hardly be expected to

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[21] *Mythologies*, 194.

[22] Alexandre Kojeve, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the 'Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. Raymond Queneau, trans. James H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press , 1969), 1.

[23] Kojeve, 1: "It is in and by --or better still, as--'his' Desire that man is formed and is revealed--to himself and others as an I, as the I that is essentially different from, and radically opposed to the non-I".

[24] Vidas, 14.

[25] Ibid., 154.

jeopardise his own quest by encouraging his spiritual symbol to embark on a quest of her own.

Miriam, then, lies closer to Emma Bovary in this regard than she does to Don Quixote. Flaubert's protagonist, Girard posits, "desires through the romantic heroines who fill her imagination. The second-rate books which she devoured in her youth have destroyed all her spontaneity".[26] Reading Walter Scott in the "mystic languor" of the convent, the adolescent Emma becomes an enthusiastic adept of unfortunate Romance heroines.[27] The same teenage confusion of religious and romantic mysticism which affects Miriam continues to destroy Emma's spontaneity even when, years later, she attends a performance of *Lucie de Lammermoor*: Carried back to the reading of her youth by the operatic adaptation of Scott's novel, Emma desires through Lucy, a tragic heroine who inhabits equally Miriam's imagination.

> [Emma] se retrouvait dans les lectures de la jeunesse, en plein Walter Scott. . . . La voix de la chanteuse ne lui semblait être que le retentissement de sa conscience, et cette illusion qui la charmait quelque chose même de sa vie.[28]

But Miriam, of course, remains purer of heart than Emma, so that the punishment for her delusion seems more unjust. Emma turns to the written word only to find the highblown emotions of Romance; Miriam equates reading with learning, the prerequisite to the man's prerogative of "doing anything". "I want to learn. Why *should* it be that I know nothing!" (186). But too long denied the transition from learning to doing, she becomes imprisoned by the very words she had hoped would free her. In revealing the tragic influence of Romance upon Miriam, Lawrence acknowledges the difficult responsibility of all who wield the"magic power of suggestion" of the written word. Faith Pullin, in her enlightening article "Lawrence's Treatment of Women in *Sons and Lovers*",[29] criticises Lawrence for writing about "the relationship between man and a series of female stereotypes". The present dissertation suggests a need to distinguish between Paul, who indeed self-servingly stereotypes Miriam, and Lawrence, who exposes romantic literature's culpability in the creation of destructive stereotypes.

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[26]Girard, 5.
[27]*Madame Bovary*, 34-36.
[28]Ibid., 212-13.
[29]Pullin, 73.

Admittedly, Lawrence might not detach himself from Paul as consistently as Cervantes does from Don Quixote, but Girard's summing-up of the influence of Amadis upon the misguided knight applies well to the influence of Scott's and the Grimm's heroines upon the misguided maiden. Cervantes and Lawrence, writers who would use the word to free the mind, know well the paradoxical power of the word to constrain it.

> One might object that Amadis is a fictitious person--and this we must admit, but Don Quixote is not the author of this fiction. The mediator is imaginary but not the mediation. Behind the hero's desires there is indeed the suggestion of a third person, the inventor of Amadis, the author of the chivalric romances. Cervantes' work is a long meditation on the baleful influence that the most lucid minds can exercise upon one another.[30]

Their commonly-held beliefs that life has dealt with them unjustly and that only a questing knight could restore them to their proper stations suggest that the two rival maidens, Gertrude and Miriam, are alike in their imaginary escape through the folk tale. Escaping himself to the sea at Rottingdean in May 1909, Lawrence found himself "alone . . . and it is dark outside, and the sea is still, and there is only Grimm's *Fairy Tales* in the room".[31] He claims in his letter to Blanche Jennings that he does not want his "pal" Grimm tonight, though it seems implicit that he was familiar with those tales, found in them material and romantic patterns to be stored away for the composition of *Sons and Lovers,* patterns that would establish telling kinships among Paul's three female lovers: the "Sleeping Beauty" parallels among Gertrude, Miriam and Clara, and the "Cinderella" dream common to Gertrude and Miriam.

"Cinderella" may not be the specific tale emerging in Gertrude's belief that providence has betrayed her--"What have I to do with all this?"--and Paul's corresponding sense "that she had been done out of her rights" (91). The Grimm's tale,[32] in fact, elevates an imprisoned daughter of a "rich man", not a nobleman, to royal "rights" which are hers only by virtue of her noble character. Still, "Cinderella" is perhaps the best known of several analogous

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[30]Girard, 4.

[31]*Letters,* I, 126.

[32]Jacob Ludwig Carl and Wilhelm Carl Grimm, "Cinderella", *Grimm's Fairy Tales,* ed. Josef Scharl (New York: Pantheon Books, 1949).

dream-fulfilment tales to allow women trapped in brutish worlds to feel themselves superior to those lesser mortals around them, and to cherish the hope that the prince's imminent arrival will restore their "rights" with deus-ex-machina celerity. Paul, in believing that Gertrude still "dreamed her young dream" (444) to the very end, suggests he has failed to some degree in his role.

At least two of Miriam's analogous tales are alluded to specifically; and while only one comes from the Grimm's *Fairy Tales,* they both correspond to the same type of dream-fulfilment, and both, unlike "Cinderella", *restore* rather than elevate one of noble birth to her "rights". Needing "something to reinforce her pride, because she felt different from other people" (174), looking to escape "brutal" brothers, "vulgar" choir girls, and "common" vicars, she turns to the Grimm's "The Six Servants", a tale in which a princess reduced to tending swine is eventually restored to her rightful status.[33] The young Miriam sees herself as "something of a princess turned into a swine-girl in her own imagination. And she was afraid lest this boy . . . might consider her simply as the swine girl, unable to perceive the princess beneath, so she held aloof" (173). "She hated her position as swine-girl. She wanted to be considered". "Yet she tried hard to scorn him, because he would not see in her the princess but only the swine girl"(174).
Lawrence might well have selected any of several of Grimm's displaced royalty: the dish-washing princess in "The Prince and the Princess", the goatherd princess in "Two-Eyes", or the goose-girl princess in her eponymous tale, though none of these maidens' offices carries the immediate dramatic impact of a swine-herd.

Maria Tatar, in *The Hard Facts of the Grimm's Fairy Tales,* finds that in this particular variation of the tales in which "the heroine suffers a humiliating fall that reduces her from princess to a peasant", the "women suffer by being forced into a lowly social position".[34] Equally apropos to both the characters of Lawrence's two princesses and the novel's theme of social imprisonment is Tatar's insight that the heroines in this type of tale "are subjected to tests of their competence in the domestic arena. . . . Fairy-tale heroines rarely display humility; rather they are placed in humble, if not

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[33]Grimm, "The Six Servants".

[34]Maria Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimm's Fairy Tales,* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), 94.

downright demeaning circumstances"[35] so they will be "abased and forced to learn humility".[36] Arguably Lawrence's folk-tale allusions suggest that, while William and Paul may indeed be "prisoners of industrialism", Gertrude and Miriam continue in the same cell as their mothers before them.

It is important to note that when Miriam appears in the second analogous tale, she is cast in Paul's rather than her own dream-fulfilment folk-tale. Gertrude's view of Miriam as a sort of spiritual vampire implies that the girl kidnaps Paul into her own romantic reverie; the truth is that Miriam accommodates herself as easily to Paul's fantasies as he does to hers. Miriam remains "aloof" because she assumes that her Walter Scott hero "would not see in her the princess". But Paul does see. True, his tale is more closely related to the "Cinderella" variation, since the heroine rises rather than returns to the nobility, but the critical elements of his perception and Miriam's nobility of character are the same. In the first visit after his illness, the resurrected Paul seems to see Miriam for the first time. In the former labourer's cottage he so "loved", Paul "watched the strange, almost rhapsodic way in which the girl moved about, carrying a great stew-jar to the oven, or looking in the saucepan. The atmosphere was different from that of his own home, where everything seemed so ordinary. . . . Miriam seemed as in some dreamy tale, a maiden in bondage, her spirit dreaming in a land far away and magical. And her discoloured, old blue frock and her broken boots seemed only like the romantic rags of King Cophetua's beggar maid" (176).

Miriam, who "resented that he saw so much", fails to understand the dual nature of Paul's abstracting perception: he both sees into her own dream world and, finding her worthy of the role, casts her as his beggar maid; the latter variation allows him to become the god-like instrument of her elevation to royalty. Though Paul might have found the beggar-maid tale in *Love's Labours Lost*, Tennyson's sonnet, included in his "English Idylls and Other Poems", seems more consistent with the young Paul's chivalric imagination. The mawkish romantic tenor of Paul's vision suggests Tennyson's "Beggar Maid" as the more likely source:

> As shines the moon in clouded skies,
> She in her poor attire was seen:
> One praised her ankles, one her eyes,

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[35]Tatar, 116.
[36]Ibid., 94.

One her dark hair and lovesome mien.
So sweet a face, such angel grace,
In all that land has never been:
Cophetua sware a royal oath:
"This beggar maid shall be my queen".

Lawrence's narrator has already prepared the reader for Paul's self-serving romantic assimilation with the platonic freezing of the doorway scene discussed in the previous chapter. Lawrence signals this is Paul's perception by having the reader see this "sudden" apparition through his eyes. The young man already encouraged by Tennyson to transform one of his spiral girls into "Elaine in *Idylls of the King*", and by the folk-tale to imagine an idyllic cottage in which he would "paint and go out as he liked and live happily ever after" with his mother (114), perceives this vision of Miriam as a set-piece of sentimental romance. The dramatic suddenness of the apparition freezes the icon in epiphanic splendour; Miriam's "dirty apron" (154) places in relief her noble "fineness" and "freeness"; the "rosy dark face", the slight resentment of strangers speak of the *farouche* child's communion with nature; the "questioning" regard, like Alissa's expression "d'interrogation" that took hold of the sentimentally romantic Jérôme's life, invites the hero to imagine he has all the appropriate answers.

One need look no farther than Miriam's beloved *Lady of the Lake* for an appropriate example of such an icon; and while Lawrence may not allude specifically to the passage in which the disguised king first sees Ellen, whose "simple grace of silvan maid . . . showed she was come of gentle race", it exemplifies the hero's archetypal abstracting perception of the maiden upon which he bases Paul's self-serving vision. King James is pursuing the stag when, suddenly, he espies this hart:

And ne'er did Grecian chisel trace
A Nymph, a Naiad, or a Grace
Of finer form, or lovelier face!
What though the sun, with ardent frown,
Had slightly tinged her cheek with brown;
The sportive toil, which, short and light,
Had dyed her glowing hue so bright,
Served too in hastier swell to show
Short glimpses of a breast of snow.
What though no rule of courtly grace
To measured mood had trained her pace,
A foot more light, a step more true,

Ne'er from the heath-flower dashed the dew.[37]

Scott's poetry is more effusive than Lawrence's parody, but the same perceptual freezing and the same Miranda type inform both icons. And as is true for all of Miriam's hidden princesses, she need not "do" anything to fulfil her dreams, save strike the appropriate posture for the abstracting hunter-prince.

Lawrence's parody-romance, then, comprises three different dream-fulfilment scenarios crafted by three different romantic souls, all casting one another in often conflicting roles. Paul enters as willingly into Miriam's as he does into his mother's, though Gertrude will prick his chivalric conscience: firstly, by trying to convince him that Miriam is indeed a *femme fatale*; secondly, by reminding him, as Ruff mentions, that "disloyalty to a knight's lady . . . was a grave fault of knighthood".[38]

> "Yes, I know it well--I am old! And therefore I may stand aside, I have nothing more to do with you. You only want me to wait on you--the rest is for Miriam".
>
> He could not bear it. Instinctively he realised that he was life to her. And after all she was the chief thing to him, the only supreme thing . . . .
>
> "No, Mother--I really *don't* love her. I talk to her-- but I want to come home to you". (251-2)

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3. "Get Thee to a Nunnery"

Lawrence exploits Romance for more than the structural implications of his parody. While Paul looks to "religion" as the source of Miriam's sexual renunciation, Romance might well prove a stronger influence. In nearly all her Waverley novels, the maidens were faced with the same limited options: virginity, marriage, convent, or "the fate worse than death", since any loss of virginity outside of marriage would be seen as a spiritual death.

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[37]Sir Walter Scott, "Lady of the lake", *Selected Poems*, ed. Thomas Crawford(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 150.

[38]Ruff, 110.

Lawrence collapses time so deftly in the chapters describing Paul and Miriam's relationship that it is easy to forget that this truly begins as "Lad-and-Girl Love", when Miriam is a sensitive and impressionable lass of "about fourteen years old"(154). It is hardly surprising, then, that she is one of those characters Frye describes as "confused by romantic assumptions about reality",[39] the type particularly vulnerable to mediated desire. Adopting the desires of Scott's maidens as her own, she is predisposed to see their heroes in Paul. Through their eyes "he looked something like a Walter Scott hero" (173). Even before she becomes Paul's intellectual "disciple", she has consumed, along with a store of the Grimm's tales, at least four of Sir Walter Scott's two-volume novels--*Ivanhoe, Rob Roy, The Bride of Lammermoor, Guy Mannering* --and two of his narrative poems, "The Lady of the Lake" and "The Lord of the Isles".[40] Lawrence includes the reading list not only to provide the particulars demanded by realism, but also to emphasize how the chivalric codes resurrected in certain nineteenth-century romances ironically form an alliance with the narrow moral strictures of Puritanism. Helen Corke, who, according to Keith Sagar, "was a much more extreme example than [Jessie Chambers] of 'The Dreaming Woman'," [41] confirmed the alliance in a letter written to Lawrence the year before he embarked upon *Paul Morel* :

> My early religious training had divided soul and body, and presented the body as the inferior, rightly subordinate to the soul. The literary patterns of the period mostly enhanced this teaching. They tended to exhibit physical passion as a gross manifestation, linking man with the animal. But, in the case of man, properly controlled by reason and the will, love was either divine or human.[42]

Paul's Tennyson and Miriam's Scott enter the Romance tradition well after "the quarrel between the body and the souls" Corke alludes to had been reestablished. Joan Ferrante finds that, while Malory, upon whom Tennyson based his Victorian cycle, "does not condemn love out of hand", he recasts the Arthurian world to emphasize where the "chivalric code, which includes

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[39]Frye, 39.

[40]See note 18.

[41]Keith Sagar, *D. H. Lawrence: Life into Art*(Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Viking Penguin, 1985), 76.

[42]Helen Corke, *In Our Infancy: An Autobiography*(Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975), 162. Sagar cites Corke on p. 76.

courtly love, is incompatible with the Christian code".[43] For Tennyson's mentor, Arthur's knights were "men who could love without lust, in truth and faithfulness". Even in part VII of the *Morte Arthure*, entitled"Lancelot and Guinevere", "the fourth chapter begins with May, the time of love, and an account of virtuous love which maintains a proper balance, reserving first 'the honoure to God and secundely thy quarrel must com of they lady'."[44] Tennyson strikes the Christian note even more vigorously, clothing Arthur with the imagery of Christ, which makes Guinevere as much a Judas as she is an Eve. Geraint is typical in reiterating his fear that the Queen's "guilty love for Launcelot" has tainted all the ladies in her court, even "Enid the Good". In emphasising the role adulterous love plays in Camelot's fall, Tennyson fuels the Victorian impression that the courtly love touted by the original troubadours as ennobling was, in reality, "dishonourable love".[45]

Scott, in his "reluctance or inability to portray sexual passion",[46] bowdlerizes thoroughly the literature of courtly love. In his heroines, the Christian assimilation of courtly love is complete, the Janus-faced heroine dons simultaneously the faces of chivalry and asceticism. Because Scott's Christianised Romance typifies that in which, as Warner notes, "heaven and earth, souls and body" were "once again severed and set against each other, the Virgin Mary could become a symbol of the ideal . . . of courtly love".[47] Just as the Knight's image fuses with that of the Christ's, the "Lucys and Rowenas" converge in the Madonna: in Lucy there was something "of a Madonna cast",[48] while Rowena "is not to be approached with other thoughts than such as we bring to the shrine of the Blessed Virgin".[49]

The Scott novels that fuel the romantic visions of the adolescent Miriam make the clear division between soul and body to which Helen Corke alludes. Christianity offered the virginal maiden only the negative encouragement of fear, while Romance extols the maintenance of her purity as both the only path to honour and the one "act" which, in a male-dominated

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[43]Joan M. Ferrante and George D. Economou, eds. *In Pursuit of Perfection: Courtly Love in Medieval Literature* (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1975), 171.

[44]Ferrante, 171.

[45]Lewis, 2.

[46]Norman Jeffares, ed. *Scott's Mind and Art* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1969), 7.

[47]Warner, 137.

[48]*The Bride of Lammermoor*, Waverley XIV, 44.

[49]*Ivanhoe*,Waverley XVI, 32.

society, might elevate woman to the heroic; there is even some symbolic suggestion that the interior treasure of virginity is somehow synonymous with the Grail itself. Paul, a self-serving male reader of chivalric romance, finds there what he wants, but he apparently ignores or refuses to acknowledge how its tales might inform Miriam's sexual attitude. He vigorously defends the code when it demands a woman look to a man as her champion, denounces it when it impedes his sexual education.

The significance of Scott may be lost upon twentieth century readers who, if they thinks of the "Wizard of the North" at all, may consider him a mere purveyor of specious romantic cliché. John Raleigh, concerned that "never before or since in Western culture has a writer been such a power in his own day and so negligible to posterity",[50] reminds us that "Wordsworth and Scott were the two single most important literary influences on the Victorians".[51] Keats remarked that "in 'our Time' there have been three literary kings: Scott, Byron and the 'Scotch novels'."[52] Lawrence knew and admired the Wizard well enough to quote him respectfully in his letters;[53] and when when he writes to Blanche Jennings that "Scott is a trifle flat nowadays" (22 Dec. 1908), he admits "it's largely my fault. You don't know how to read 'em. Folks *will* want things intellectually done".[54]

It seems unlikely, then, that Lawrence means Miriam's affinity for Scott to be viewed as totally ironic; in fact, the fourteen-year-old's literary taste seems more precocious than childish, and not so very different from the Tennyson that fed Paul's romantic visions. Lawrence is more probably concerned with what a sensitive but untutored country girl with mystical inclinations would extract from Scott, reading him "in her bedroom, aloft, alone" (173). There, when "a tremendous sunset burned out the western sky", Scott's literary progressiveness would count for little; his chivalric vision of love as the matrix of honour and purity, however, bathed in a rosy glow what her puritanism set in a harsher light.

Miriam's contemplation of Lucy Ashton renders the multiple image of a girl looking into the mirror of mediated desire at a girl who, in turn, is

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[50]John Henry Raleigh, "What Scott Meant to the Victorians", *Victorian Studies* 7 (1970): 7.
[51]Ibid., 8.
[52]*Letters of John Keats*, II, 16.
[53]*Letters*, II, 16; III, 349.
[54]*Letters*, I, 101.

looking into a similar mirror. In escaping through Scott's novels to the world of "Lucys", Miriam identifies with a girl

> of a romantic disposition, delighting in tales of love and wonder, and readily identifying herself with the situation of those legendary heroines, with whose adventures, for want of better reading, her memory had been stocked.[55]

> Lucy Ashton was peculiarly accessible to those of a romantic cast. Her secret delight was in the old legendary tales of ardent devotion and unalterable affection . . . . This was her favoured fairy realm, and here she erected her aerial palaces.[56]

The reflections are alike, too, in that the girl denied the chance "of knowing anything--of learning--of doing anything . . . because I'm a woman"(185) sees a girl who, "according to the ideas of the time, which did not permit a young woman to offer her sentiments on any subject of importance . . . was bound to appear ignorant".[57] Lucy's knowledge of her external reality is limited , like that of the heroine of *Rob Roy*, by the literature she mistakes "for life". Lady Di's "stock of mental acquisitions from books was compared with her total ignorance of actual life. It seemed as if she saw and knew every thing except what passed in the world around her".[58] Scott, like Lawrence, seems here to recognise the dangers of inherited visions; yet this fairy world is a principal source of his maidens' alienation from a world that would disturb their "feminine" purity. As David Morse finds, Scott, like most of the writers of the Romantic period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, gives "prominence to heroic figures who are alienated from the everyday bourgeois world". For characters like Miriam, Lucy, and Di, their inability to function in the "real" world is a sign of their heroic potential; any "rapprochement would be a sign of degradation".[59]

Besides, Scott's storylines suggest that his heroines find in their aerial tales proper models upon which to pattern their own heroism. The white knights in their lives are indeed noble men, who are attracted to "innocent", "beautiful and helpless" maidens. Lucy "had never happened to see a young

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[55]*Bride of Lammermoor*, Waverley, XIV, 441.
[56]Ibid., 45.
[57]Ibid., 65.
[58]*Rob Roy*, Waverley, VII, 208.
[59]David Morse, *Romanticism: A Structural Analysis* (London: Barnes and Noble, 1982), 205.

man of mien and features so romantic and so striking as young Ravenswood".[60] Ravenswood's dramatic killing of the bull that imperils Lucy's life is a decidedly more romantic rescue than Paul's deliverance of Miriam via the rigours of French and algebra, but Miriam feels with the same intensity as Lucy that "no one else could have been linked to her heart by the strong associations of remembered danger and escape, of gratitude, wonder, and curiosity".[61] Paul's "poor morsel of learning exalted him almost sky-high in her esteem" (174). To the heroes' minds, after their beauty, Lucy's and Miriam's natural passivity, enhanced by their maidenly gratitude, seems their most endearing charm. Lucy speaks little, "and what she did say argued a submissive gentleness, and a desire to give pleasure, which to a proud man like Ravenswood, was more fascinating than the most brilliant wit".[62] Miriam incites Paul's first condescending awareness, "because she seemed so humble" (182); perhaps her favourite posture for Paul, who, Clara suspects, likes to think of his ladies safely shut in his pavilion(274), is when she "crouched on the hearthrug near his feet. The glow was warm on her handsome, pensive face as she kneeled there like a devotee" (224).

John Leyerle, in his discussion of chivalric literature, explains how one of Romance's "major themes" promises its female readers that, paradoxically, the passivity the knight finds so attractive is their only source of heroism.

> For women in an honor/shame culture, honor depends on public recognition in a markedly different fashion than for men. Honor for women is a function of sexual chastity; shame comes from any public evidence of unchastity or sexual aggression. Honor in this sense is not easily translated into heroic action. Consequently, chivalric literature is full of heroines who preserve their honor passively by resisting sexual advances. Heroic resistance is often portrayed as suffering, the frequent role of women in medieval literature.[63]

And Northrop Frye further explains how the cultural myth that would encourage women in their weakness, passivity, and suffering, attests to the confluence of romantic and Christian sophistry.

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[60]*Bride of Lammermoor*, Waverley, XIV, 79.
[61]Ibid., 79.
[62]Ibid., 215.
[63]*Chivalric Literature*, 140.

> With the rise of the romantic ethos, heroism comes increasingly to be thought of in terms of suffering, endurance, and patience, which can coexist with such weakness [the physical weakness of women assumed in romance], whatever kinds of strength it may require. This is also the ethos of the Christian myth, where the heroism of Christ takes the form of enduring the Passion. Such a change in the conception largely accounts for the prominence of female figures in romance.[64]

True to the romantic formula perceived by Leyerle and Frye, the naturally submissive and gentle Lucy commutes her passivity into the heroic when resisting what she considers to be illicit sexual advances. Convinced that her saviour has forsaken her, she allows her parents to bully her into a marriage of convenience; she still privately honours, however, the "sacrament" in which Edgar "gave his faith to her for ever, and received her troth in return".[65] As she awaits the 'fate worse than death', she imagines herself the immured captive, and bravely vows "I must extricate myself or die".[66] Scott is too discreet to record the moment when the cornered Lucy fights off her assailant, but the reader needs little imagination--may even ignore that the medieval virgin was identified by her "head-gear"-- to envision what has happened in "the bridal chamber":

> Here they found the unfortunate girl, seated, or rather couched like a hare upon its form -- her head gear dishevelled; her night-clothes torn and dabbled with blood,-- her eyes glazed, and her features convulsed into a wild paroxysm of insanity. When she saw herself discovered, she gibbered, made mouths, and pointed at them with bloody fingers, with the frantic gestures of an exulting demoniac. [67]

The once gentle Lucy is "overpowered, but not without the use of some force". Her bridegroom survives, but Lucy dies without "being able to utter a word explanatory of the fatal scene". Scott allows Lucy a merciful end

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[64]Frye, however, seems to disagree with Lewis and, particularly, Warner, who hold that the Church co-opted Romance to inculcate its own attitudes about women. "This means that the myth of romance, though closely related to the myth of Christianity, and for centuries contemporary with it, should not be thought of as derived from it" (88).

[65]*Bride of Lammermoor*,Waverley, XIV, 291-92.

[66]Ibid., 432.

[67]*Bride of Lammermoor*,Waverley,XIV, 482-83.

since, according to romance's often misogynous code, "even a purely symbolic rape may still be, or represent, a fate worse than death".[68]

Rowena serves as a less spectacular model of virginal heroism than does Lucy, though there was much need for the bride of Lammermoor's 'passive heroism' in a time when the Normans commonly "invaded the honour of [the Saxon] wives and . . . daughters with the most unbridled license".[69] Still, when the villainous DeBracy carries her off, her strength of character easily deters her would-be assailant. The text provides little proof that she has endured much torment, but the narrator assures us that "an unwonted degree of paleness showed the sufferings she had undergone".[70]

Frye ignores Rowena but calls upon the other *Ivanhoe* maiden, Rebecca, as an example of the virgin's heroic potential. The age's bigotry places the abducted Jewess[71] in a particularly untenable position, yet the normally obsequious heroine will brook no advances from the brutish Brian de Bois Guilbert. She knows perfectly well when the passive maiden needs to assume the masculine prerogative to act. Preferring death to shame, Rebecca hurls her gauntlet:

> "I tell thee, proud Templar, that not in thy fiercest battles hast thou displayed more of thy vaunted courage than has been shown by woman when called upon to suffer by affection or duty. I am myself a woman, tenderly nurtured, naturally fearful of danger, and impatient of pain --yet when we enter those final lists, thou to fight and I to suffer, I feel the strong assurance within me, that my courage shall mount higher than thine".[72]

The unexpected interruption of the Templar's Grand Master saves Rebecca here, though she looks to Ivanhoe "as the champion whom Heaven has sent me when" the heroic knight later defends her against the accusations of Bois Guilbert.[73]

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[68]Frye, 82.

[69]*Ivanhoe,* Waverley, XVI, 336.

[70]*Ivanhoe,* Waverley, XVII, 153.

[71]It is interesting that Lawrence gives the "brown-skinned" Miriam a Jewish name, suggesting perhaps, as it does with Rebecca, both her "Oriental" sensuousness and the social impossibility of her marriage with a Westerner.

[72]*Ivanhoe,* Waverley, XVII, 283.

[73]Ibid., 369.

Allowing that Miriam casts Paul, who "looked something like a Walter Scott hero"(173), as her Ivanhoe, it is understandable that she is slow to believe the champion whose task it is to defend her honour is, in truth, bent upon taking it from her. Certainly "the sad gravity of [Ivanhoe's] brow"[74] recalls the "peculiar knitting of [Paul's] brow" (50), while the knight's "rather slender than strongly made physique",[75] resembles Paul's "rather small and rather finely-made" build (113). Since Miriam and Paul "were both late in coming to maturity, and psychical ripeness was much behind even the physical" (198), there was nothing in the first years of their relationship to disturb the Platonic. And when physical desire finally raises its head, Miriam's ability to sublimate her passion in both her anthropomorphism and the higher calling as Paul's spiritual muse serves as a natural ally to the Maiden's inveterate renunciation, her requisite trial through suffering. Still, as discussed in the previous chapter, Miriam's sublimation is not always successful. "She dreamed dreams of him, vivid, unforgettable. These dreams came again later on, developed to a more subtle psychological stage" (202). "She searched earnestly in herself to see if she wanted Paul Morel. She felt there would be some disgrace in it. Full of twisted feeling, she was afraid she did want him. She stood self-convicted" (208).

According to the code for Scott's heroines, Miriam's standards would seem dangerously liberal when she allows Paul to go off with Clara to purge his "lower self". As her knight, Paul's honour is inextricably tied to the defence of hers; while she, too, experiences unmaidenly desire, she cannot believe that Paul seriously wants to compromise her out of wedlock. He must, her chivalric code assures her, be mistaking what he thinks to be physical frustration for his family's interference (a common obstacle to romantic love): "This about not loving her, physically, bodily, was mere perversity on his part, because he knew she loved him. . . . 'What have they been saying at home?' she asked" (261). Miriam believed that in Paul, a Walter Scott hero undergoing a spiritual trial, "there were in him desires for higher things, and desires for lower, and that the desire for the higher would conquer. At any rate, he should try" (269). The Paul-narrator's interjection that Miriam's "'higher' and 'lower' were arbitrary" ignores the courtly code whereby sometimes the knight "is drawn away from his love by worldly

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[74]*Ivanhoe*, Waverley, XVI, 326.
[75]Ibid., 128.

desires which, in Romance, are often represented by other women. When and if he overcomes his lower impulses, he is reunited with the woman he loves and that union signifies the harmony he has achieved within himself and with his world".[76]

Paul's reaction to Clara not only galvanises Miriam's renunciation, it helps clarify exactly what virginity means to Miriam. When Paul first "gazes" at this *femme fatale,* Miriam "saw his masculine spirit rear its head" (222). The double entendre is Lawrence's rather than Miriam's, though she sees clearly the source of Clara's attraction. "Look at her mouth--made for passion--and the very set-back of her throat. . . . Miriam bowed a little lower"(225). Paul likes "her skin and the texture--and her--I don't know--there's a sort of fierceness somewhere in her". Paul here has articulated Miriam's "lower" definition of the sexual, one in which the spiritual has no place.

Paul, as we have seen, insists that Miriam's virginity is the outward sign of "an eternal maidenhood", a natural repulsion of the sexual better satisfied by the convent than by marriage. But such accusations ignore the implications of romantic structure, in which the sexual act inevitably takes place outside the story, discreetly hidden in the "happily ever after". As Northrop Frye explains, even if we consider virginity in the light of social pragmatism, "behind all the 'fate worse than death' situations that Romance delights in, there runs the sense that a woman deprived of her virginity, by any means except a marriage she has at least consented to, is, to put it vulgarly, in an impossible bargaining position".[77] When Paul accuses Miriam, even after she has made love with him, of not "wanting" him, she counters: "You see--as we are--how can I get used to you? It would come all right if we were married" (334). How could it be otherwise? According to her Christian code, she has sinned; according to the chivalric code, she has forfeited her one chance to be heroic; according to society's male-dominated rules, she has flown in the face of the fact that a man "assumes that he ought to get a virgin at marriage, otherwise he may feel that he has acquired a second-hand possession".[78]

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[76]Joan M. Ferrante, *Women as Image in Medieval Literature: From the Twelfth Century to Dante* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 2-3.

[77]Frye, 73.

[78]Frye, 78.

Frye looks to Scott's Rebecca, the "innocent victim of a venomous bigotry" who holds on to her faith as a Jew as well as her virginity, as an example of how "Romance, in its stress on the theme of virginity, may be talking about something more than the condition of the hymen membrane".[79] For Miriam, that something more centres on her refusal to believe that "brutishness", the male tendency to indulge in the the lowest animal appetites and deny the spiritual, need characterize men's treatment of women. "Gentle" Ivanhoe routed Brian de Bois Guilbert and his brutish mob in a single joust at the outset of the novel, then duplicates his feat when he becomes Rebecca's "Heaven-sent" champion at the end. Paul, whom Miriam mistook as a "new specimen" of the "male sex", one "who could be gentle" (174), was to have effected the same sort of divine justice in her world; instead he mocks Miriam when she refuses to join him in his brutishness.

Lawrence's romance-parody suggests that Paul fails Miriam. As we have seen, Paul, who understands that his father's generation "had blundered rather brutally through their [wives'] feminine sanctities" (322), desecrates Miriam. Paul ascribes his attendant "sense of failure and death" (334) to Miriam's inability to be with him; but he fails to awaken the slumbering Princess because *he* becomes a "thick-voiced, oblivious stranger" (330). Miriam's fear and horror are born of her perception that her passionate knight "seemed to be almost unaware of her". In a sacramental gesture common to Christian and Romantic myth, Miriam, one of those girls "as treasure religion inside them" (177), opens her tabernacle to offer this chalice, a Grail of communion to a knight questing to reunite body and soul. To Miriam, Paul reacts instead like some savage infant, "which, when it has drunk its fill, throws away and smashes the cup" (340).

Miriam's "sacrifice" goes well beyond some reductive religious sublimation. She has already suffered in her first stage of renunciation, suffered again in giving Paul over to Clara, suffered a third time when Paul dismisses her as "a mystic nun" (292). She wants to believe Paul's assurance that this sexual communion will be ennobling--"He said that possession was great moment in life"--the very argument against which Christianised Romance had set itself at the end of the twelfth century. Ironically, then, it is Miriam's willingness to place her love for Paul above Lucy's, Rowena's, and Rebecca's fear of "shame", that elevates her to the heroism of another

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[79]Ibid., 85.

Romance tradition, one in which "love reached perfection through the physical and spiritual union of his lovers".[80] Gottfried von Stassburg's *Tristan* accepts the complexity of the true human condition, whereby one is "forced to choose between two loyalties": Miriam chooses a love both physical and spiritual over her mother's Christianity, that love over honour. This is the world Lawrence always seems to strive for, a romantic oasis between the sensual indulgence of the early Troubadours and the puritan chastity of Tennyson and Scott. Paul's need to separate the spiritual and sensual signals he has yet to shed the Arthurian psychology of easy dichotomy. Miriam, in deciding that "perhaps it was so. There was something divine in it" (328), stands ready, like Isolde, to "resign herself body and soul to Love";[81] like Tristan, to reject Brangane's warning to "first think of God and then of your hopes of Paradise",[82] like Gottfried himself, to risk both earthly shame and eternal damnation for a world in which body and soul combined in noble love: "To this let my life be given, of this world let me be part, to be damned or saved with it".[83]

Lawrence allows Paul to condemn himself through what seems a casual allusion to another milestone in German Literature. In one of his final attempts to seduce Miriam Paul assures her, "But there's not much risk for you really--not in the Gretchen way. You can trust me there?" (327). Lawrence's irony suggests that Miriam's "quick and strong" response--"Oh I can trust you!" will lead to the same tragic consequences Goethe's guileless Gretchen[84] experiences in *Faust*. The similarities between both the

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[80] George D. Economou, "The Two Venuses and Courtly Love", Ferrante and Economou, 37.

[81] *Tristan*, 197. In October 1909, Lawrence saw Wagner's *Tristun und Isolde*, the opera which had given a new impulse to the Tristan myth. See Worthen, *D. H. L.; The Early Years*, 255.

[82] Ibid., 201.

[83] Ibid., 42. Joseph Campbell makes a similar point concerning the rivalry between Gottfried's "religion" and Christianity. In Tristan's willingness to accept "eternal punishment in the fires of hell", Campbell sees the implication "that his love is bigger than death and pain, than anything" *The Power of Myth*, ed. Betty Sue Flowers (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 190.

[84] Lawrence discusses Goethe's Gretchen as a "production of the long selection by man" in both the Hardy essay and *Twilight in Italy*, a collection of essays begun shortly after completion of *Sons and Lovers*. Sue Bridehead, he claims, comes from "a long line of . . . women who submitted to the man-idea, flattered the man, and bored him, the Gretchens and the Turgenev heroines, those who have betrayed the female and who therefore only seem to exist to be betrayed by their men" (*Hardy*, 109). Lawrence remains equally ambivalent about male culpability in the *Twilight* essay "The Theatre". While Lawrence admits that male authors have self-servingly "produced" the "pattern", part of him sympathizes with the "bored" male betrayers and despises the betrayed. "In every age, in every clime, she is dear, at any rate to the masculine soul, this soft, tear-blenched, blond,

protagonists and thematic concerns in the two works are striking. Miriam, like, Gretchen is spiritual, naive, romantic, submissive, completely trusting that Faust's love is as selfless and enduring as her own; her willingness to accommodate her "noble" lover is urged, as is Miriam's, by rebellion against a puritanic mother and by her own sensual desire. Like Paul, Faust, while cynical about religion, sees in his maiden a romantic symbol of man's "higher" self; and like Paul, Faust is the inexperienced dichotomiser who hates Gretchen as soon as she fails in her symbolic role by submitting to his seduction. Lawrence's point seems to be that Paul *does* leave Miriam in the Gretchen way, not pregnant, but "feeling dead" and looking to heaven for a solution. In fact, Lawrence's hero is, in one sense, crueller than Goethe's. Paul's selfish need for maternal and spiritual comfort motivate his last visit to Miriam--"And without marriage we can do nothing?" (467); In his final visit to Gretchen, Faust selflessly restores her sanity through his revivified love.[85] Ultimately, of course, Gretchen and Miriam, in their roles as both spiritual symbol and initiators into sensual experience, remain the Maiden, the passive instrument for the active developing male.[86]

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4. "The Beatrice Pattern"

Written some seventeen years after the completion of *Sons and Lovers*, Lawrence's essay "Give Her a Pattern" offers what seems an insight into why Paul's Tristan refuses the sacrifice of Miriam's Isolde.

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ill-used thing. She must be ill-used and unfortunate. Dear Gretchen , dear Desdemona, dear Iphigenia, dear Dame aux Camélias, dear Lucy of Lammermoor". Even more interesting is the insight into how a Paul could so easily betray a heroine he has helped to 'produce '. "Why are women so bad at playing this part in real life, this Ophelia-Gretchen role? Why are they so unwilling to go mad and die for our sakes? They do it regularly on the stage. But perhaps, after all, we write the plays. What a villain I am, what a black-browed, passionate, ruthless, masculine villain I am to the leading lady on the stage; and, on the other hand, dear heart, what a hero, what a fount of chivalrous generosity and faith! I am *anything* but a dull and law-abiding citizen" (*Twilight*, 71, 73).

[85]Gretchen, of course, is held back by her grief and remorse from leaving the prison with Faust until Mephistopheles's appearance repels her. Her ultimate salvation depends on her finally resisting her lover's pleas out of a moral and pious instinct. Lawrence implies that Miriam would throw pious remorse to the winds if Paul really loved her.

[86]Though at the end of Part II, Gretchen's penitent spirit, among the ranks of angels, 'actively' intercedes for Faust.

> The real trouble about women is that they must always go on trying to adapt themselves to men's theories of women, as they have always done. When a woman is thoroughly herself, she is being what her type of man wants her to be. When a woman is hysterical it's because she doesn't quite know what to be, which pattern to follow, which man's picture of woman to live up to.[87]

In applying the theory to Paul's and Miriam's affair, Paul is arguably the "type" of what I have been calling Christianised Romance, who demands that code's pattern of the spiritual heroine. And what Lawrence holds as true for all men, seems particularly apropos to Paul: "Whatever pattern the poor woman tries to live up to; he'll want another".[88] When Paul tires of Miriam's rarefied spiritual air and alters his quest to incorporate a physical component, his adolescent romantic vision cannot imagine that a single pattern would allow a single woman to embody such a unity.

In the uncut letters that close the "Defeat of Miriam", now restored in the Cambridge edition,[89] Paul vacillates between blaming Miriam for the failure of their relationship and admitting that his "patterns" have placed her in a no-win situation. He can only give her "spirit love" because *he* is "too refined, too civilised". Miriam, he admits, satisfied "a place in my nature which no one else could fill. You have played a fundamental part in my development"(292). Consistent with his later admission that he, like Miriam, "was bound in by [his] own virginity" (323), Paul confesses that he has "alternately hated and loved the earthy stuff of myself". His recognition that he has been "cruel" to Miriam when he "loved it" anticipates ironically his increased cruelty toward her during "the "Test on Miriam". To enlighten Miriam, Paul sends her "a little *Omar Khayam*" and Rossetti's *The Blessed Damosel*. While he is clearly confused about the conflict between his own body and spirit, his selections imply he has elected the sensual path--"we should drink the red wine of life" (293)--while she remains the Beatrice-type of the Pre-Raphaelite poem, leaning "out from the gold bar of heaven",

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[87] *Phoenix II: Uncollected, Unpublished and Other Prose Works*, eds. Warren Roberts and Harry T. Moore (London: Heinemann, 1968), 535. The Notes explain the essay "first Appeared in the *Daily Express* for 19 June 1929 as "The Real Trouble About Women".

[88] *Phoenix* II, 537.

[89] In the explanatory notes for the Cambridge edition, 558, the Barons explain that Garnett cut the sections that Lawrence had left in his final manuscript.

praying that she and her earth-bound lover will be reunited in platonic union beneath "that living mystic tree".

"Miriam represents spirit to Paul; Clara embodies flesh", concludes Patricia Meyer Spacks, who sees this sort of "dichotomising" as characteristic of "the adolescent mind".[90] It could be added that what is characteristic of the adolescent's perspective is characteristic, too, of Romance. Frye explains "the polarizing tendency in romance" as characteristic of its "mental landscape", its need to reduce a complex reality to simplistic antitheses.[91] Paul, who has become the particular mediator of the desires Miriam inherits from Scott et al., limits her to what Lawrence calls the "Beatrice" pattern, leaving her to wait and wait while he uses Clara for his "Baptism" into the flesh. In the terms of Lawrence's 1929 essay, Miriam's tragedy demonstrates the "inhuman nastiness of the pattern"; for Miriam, like Beatrice, "had to go on being chaste and untouched all her life, according to Dante's pattern, while Dante had a cosy wife and kids at home. . . . The worst of it is, as soon as a woman has really lived up to the man's pattern, the man dislikes her for it".[92] *Sons and Lovers* suggests the dichotomising encouraged by such patterning leads to an even sadder tragedy when a woman dares to fulfil simultaneously the functions of two patterns the demanding male deems to be mutually exclusive.

Lawrence's essay touches upon what is arguably an even greater tragic result for the woman of adolescent and romantic "patterning": the impossibility of finding *her* authentic self. In "all the atrocious patterns of womanhood that men have supplied to woman . . . the one thing he won't accept her as is a human being, a real human being of the feminine sex".[93] Worse yet, in the habitual attempt to be what her type of man wants her to be, the woman *believes* she "is thoroughly herself". Lawrence's theory, then, seems to anticipate Girard's concern that the Don Quixotes and Emma Bovarys who "borrow their desires from the Other" "completely confuse it with the will to be Oneself".[94]

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[90]Patricia Meyer Spacks, *The Adolescent Idea: Myths of Youth and the Adult Imagination* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 246.

[91]Frye, 53.

[92]"Give Her a Pattern", *Phoenix II*, 536.

[93]Ibid., 536.

[94]Girard, 4.

The pattern Scott and Paul foist upon Miriam is not that of a person at all, but rather that of a symbol. What Joan Ferrante says of twelfth-century literature seems largely true of Paul's perception of Miriam. Women "are not portrayed as 'real people' with human problems; they are symbols, aspects of psychological forces that trouble the male world. . . . In lyric and Romance they represent his ideals, his aspirations".[95] As Miriam's teacher, Paul enjoys the same potential influence Ferrante suspects in Tristan, who begins his relationship with Isolde as her tutor. "The woman is the man's creation and his ideal; she is educated and moulded by him, and therefore his possession spiritually".[96] Miriam represents Paul's aspiration to elevate his art to a transcendence that opposes the middle-class materialism to which Gertrude would direct him. What dooms the relationship from the start is that Miriam also represents the spiritual face of the man-woman relationship, which Lawrence describes in his Hardy essay as "the via media to being".[97] Once Miriam has accomplished her task as Muse, Paul leaves her to pursue the heroic aloneness demanded by yet another romantic "pattern" of the artist; once Paul demands a sensual element in his quest for being, his dichotomising vision denies Miriam the same ontological shift. As Vidas puts it, "Paul, as the reality of the body comes into play in his development, childishly thinks that Miriam is immutable, while he is open to the change that has always been Lawrence's substitute for belief in an external absolute".[98] In either case, Lawrence suggests, the patterns of Romance see the quest for the authentic self as an exclusively male activity.

In "The Artist as Savior", John Edward Hardy views Lawrence's novel as a portrait of the "artist-hero," struggling between his task as savior of the imaginatively dormant and the "thrust toward solitude" mentioned above.[99] Edwin Moseley sees similarly in *Sons and Lovers* Lawrence's concern with "the plight of the artist in society and with his lonely destiny". Paul is the questing Knight-Christ, sacrificing himself to awaken others", a kind of self-denying god figure in relationship to . an abusive society".[100] Both of these

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[95]Ferrante, *Women as Image in Medieval Literature*, 1.

[96]Joan M. Ferrante, *The Conflict of Love and Honor: The Medieval Tristan Legend in France, Germany and Italy* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), 14-15.

[97]Rossman cites this from Thomas Hardy.

[98]Vidas, 161.

[99]John Edward Hardy, *Man in the modern Novel* (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1964), 52.

[100]Edwin M. Moseley, *Pseudonyms of Christ in the Modern Novel* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1962), 82.

fine arguments, in this writer's opinion, are less critical than Lawrence of Paul's messianic success, and less generous than Lawrence in assessing Miriam's role as Paul's spiritual Muse.

Paul the "artist-savior", Hardy asserts, awakens the industrial dead wherever he goes, once he is about his "divine" mission. When he paints the girls in the spiral department, "the effect is, at least momentarily to take them 'out of themselves.' They, in their dullness and dreariness, the rooms of the shop itself, are touched elevated, by the wand of his brush".[101] Hardy concedes that Miriam, as Paul admits, "stimulated him into appreciating things" (179), but contends she bleeds her saviour more than she nourishes him. "In every sense, [Paul] brings her to life, and the world for her. Gertrude even in her jealousy, is perfectly right, that Miriam is the sort of woman who would 'suck a man's soul out till he had none of his own left'... He returns again and again, almost fatalistically, to the self-destroying, self-dividing agony of the effort to redeem her from *her* incompleteness--that suffocating 'spirituality' of her shame in her body".[102] Hardy allows that Paul's "sacrifice is 'successful'," in some sense, with Clara, restoring her "to realization of herself as a woman". But "Miriam seems in the end irredeemable". Hardy concludes that the self-denying Christ "gets nothing, finally, from either".[103]

But Lawrence suggests Paul the "savior-artist" gets a good deal from Miriam; and that it is precisely her "spirituality" that sustains him in at least the first stage of his artistry. Paul, while admittedly ambivalent, finds in Miriam and her mother the transcendence Gertrude could never provide. At the threshold of adulthood, a juncture critical to the inextricably tied development of man and artist, "this atmosphere, where everything took a religious value, came with a subtle fascination to him. There was something in the air. His own mother was logical. Here there was something different, something he loved, something that at times he hated" (178). Whatever the attitude, Paul, more than sacrificing himself to redeem Miriam from her incompleteness, demands she adhere to the Beatrice "pattern". As discussed in the previous chapter, "one can more readily accept Miriam's 'spirituality'", Spacks notes, "as a phenomenon of Paul's perception than believe in her

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[101]Hardy, 58.
[102]Ibid., 60.
[103]Ibid., 61.

asserted incompleteness as an objective fact".[104] Paul needs Miriam to be the archetypal spiritual symbol of his quest for artistic transcendence, whereby he will become, like the Stephen in that other portrait of the developing artist, "a priest of eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everlasting life".[105]

Miriam fulfils Paul's pattern with every romantic flourish. For the knight who possesses little of value "as far as this world's gear went" (114), she provides the confidence that art indeed qualifies as an heroic act. Nobler than her rival muse, Miriam directs Paul towards trials more consistent with his development, adopts the more selfless attitude towards the quest for which she serves as inspiration. Gertrude, as has been discussed, insistent that her sons "work out what *she* wanted", directs them to the destructive city, her "great centres of industry"; "logical" rather than spiritual, she can inspire only the mundane. Miriam encourages Paul to pursue the quest *he* has chosen and directs him, consistent with her romantic attitudes, to redemptive nature, which in the world of eighteenth and nineteenth century romance, is the idealised prelapsarian intersection of heaven and earth that opposes the material wasteland of industrialism.

Mrs Morel is, of course, sensitive to nature; one thinks immediately of her epiphanic lilies "reeling" in the moonlight. Believing, however, that the pit is the only way in which a man in her community can work with the earth, she directs both sons away from the country. Paul "thought *perhaps* he might also make a painter", but he had been made to feel that he must first nourish an "ambition as far as this world's gear went" (114) in the world of industry, where a "clever painter" was made to feel inadequate, since "nothing he had was of any commercial value" (113). Gertrude sends him to "look in the paper for the advertisements" (114), delivers him personally to "the jaws of the dragon" (118) in Nottingham. This is the city where William had initiated his ascent to the middle class; it seems likely that Paul is destined for London, the real seat of commercial power, where a promising lad nearly doubles his commercial value, earning "a hundred and twenty a year" instead of "thirty shillings a week", where William once --"he would do well", Gertrude was convinced-- "wore *her* favour in the battle" (103).

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[104]Spacks, 247.

[105]James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young man*, 226.

Miriam not only brings Paul to the country, she provides a continual pastoral remedy for his days at "'Thomas Jordan and Son --Surgical Appliances'." Lawrence makes the point structurally, introducing Miriam's romantic countryside as a "half-day holiday" from the "confinement" in the spiral department (148), and just at the point that Lily the "witch-woman" has fatally enthralled brother William. While Gertrude assumes they are both *femmes fatales,* Lawrence's structural implication is that "anthropomorphic" Miriam embodies restorative nature as an alternative to the vacuous and destructive city for which Lily Western stands as symbol. In pre-industrial Romance she is the much admired Miranda, free from the intrigues of court; in Sir Walter Scott's Victorian romance, she is the "silvan" Lady of the Lake offering the nineteenth-century reader a momentary escape from the smoke of industrial reality, the Diana Vernon who introduces the city boy to nature's mystical superiority in *Rob Roy.* Osbaldistone resorts to the language of religion to describe the nature in which he finds his maiden.

> The glorious beams of the rising sun, which from a tabernacle of purple and golden clouds, were darted full on such a scene of natural romance and beauty as had never before greeted my eyes . . . Man alone seemed to be placed in a state of inferiority, in a scene where all the ordinary features of nature were raised and exalted.[106]

Again it is important to notice that Paul's attitudes match Miriam's in their romantic tenor. Miriam, for whom Scott's Lady provides a romantic model for her rustic reality, makes a mystical nature "her friend, her companion, her lover" (201). Paul's idealisation approaches the girl's. When the journey to Willey farm takes them in ritualistic stages from the coal "pit" to a "wild meadow", where "high overhead a heron floated", Paul calls upon a common Victorian simile for romantically savage wilderness: "'It's a wild road, mother.' said Paul. 'Just like Canada'"(153). The perspective and language become increasingly romantic as Lawrence subtly shifts the narrative point of view from the objective to subjective --Paul "directed his mother [and so, too, the reader], what she must see and what not". He sees,

> a broad green alley of the wood, with a new thicket of fir and pine on one hand, an old oak glade, dipping down on the other. And among the oaks the bluebells stood in pools of

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[106]*Rob Roy,* Waverley, VIII, 199.

> azure, under the new green hazels, upon a pale fawn floor of oak-leaves. (153)

And now that nature has been cleansed of all traces of civilisation, Paul directs his mother's eyes to an earlier age, one in which Miriam's family, "so cut off from the world" that "they seemed , somehow" (Paul searches for an appropriate simile of the topical land-owners' decline) "like 'les derniers fils d'une race épuisée'" (180),[107] lived one with nature. In a world where people and nature are joined seamlessly, all that belongs to the Leivers family embraces all that is natural:

> In front, along the edge of the wood, was a cluster of low, red farm buildings . . . . Flush with the wood was the apple-orchard, where blossom was falling on the grind stone. The pond was deep under a hedge, and overhanging oak trees. Some cows stood in the shade. The farm and buildings, three sides of a quadrangle, embraced the sunshine towards the wood. It was very still. (154)

How romantically appropriate, then, the ritualistic stage being set, that the silvan maid "suddenly" appeared", "rosy dark face, a bunch of short black curls, very fine and free" (154). Miriam is a silvan Beatrice of what David Morse identifies as Romance's "idea of the picturesque", the symbol "of transition from one place to another".[108] Without her, Lawrence seems to imply, the artist would not be able to fulfil his task as "mediator" who "connects the natural and the civilised",[109] who comments on the transition from an age characterised by man's harmony with nature to one characterised by the cacophony of man, money and machine. At this juncture Lawrence's romance-parody turns to sympathy. In identifying Scott's concern for "the passing of traditional society and its supersession by a commercial-legal type of society", Morse could just as well be addressing one of Lawrence's thematic centres here and throughout his life. Graham

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[107]Interestingly, the Barons' notes cite a quotation from another of Miriam's novels, Scott's *Guy Mannering*--"My father, the eldest son of ancient but reduced family"--as an example of a "nineteenth-century topos" to which Lawrence "gave extensive thought" (535, note to 180:15). The Barons point to the topos, as well, in George Sand's *Mauprat* (1837), Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* (1849-50), and J. -K. Huysmans' *A Rebours* (1884), French works that seem to inform the same sense of aristocratic decline Alissa's family experiences in *La Porte étroite.*

[108]Morse, 146.

[109]Ibid, 193.

Holderness's summing-up articulates cogently Miriam's role as the pastoral Beatrice.

> Miriam is discovered in a pastoral world--rural, agricultural, deep in the forest--outside the industrial landscape, by a transition from one world to another .... There is in Miriam an idealism which answers to Paul's original preconceptions; and we find that 'transcendent' element of Miriam presented by Lawrence in language and imagery which he himself has used to express and pursue such transcendence.[110]

Paul the questing artist, then, arguably preconceives for Miriam the "pattern" of the spiritual Beatrice who has long guided the quester in the transition from the mundane to the transcendent. Arguably, too, the pattern Vidas describes as the "lady of the Beatrice-Sophia type common to most "Western-Christian secular romance"[111] proves an even more compelling reason than either Paul's adolescent "dichotomising" or his sexual insecurity for his need to keep Miriam virginal. In even his last visit to Miriam, Paul might be suggesting that she had "brought forth to him his imaginations" because, as discussed at the end of the last chapter, his artistic "spiritual consciousness" had not been "obliterated" by "the dark-potency of blood acts".[112]

In an article that likens Paul's quest to the theory of the Sacred Fount, Maurice Beebe finds in Paul's last meeting with Miriam the implication that one of Paul's reasons for leaving his muse is she will not provide the fount of "sexual creative flow" he now believes necessary to stimulate artistic creative flow.

> When near the end of *Sons and Lovers* Paul Morel says to himself, "you can go on with your painting, . . . or else you can beget children"(456), Lawrence asserts that sexual and artistic creativity offer two ways out of despair; and in spite of the "or else" which separates painting from begetting children, Lawrence treats them as equivalents. I see in this a clue to one of the fundamental themes of *Sons and Lovers*, for if that novel is about love, as everyone agrees that it is, it is also about art--not merely because Paul is an artist as well as

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[110]Holderness, 151.

[111]Vidas, 14

[112]See page 68.

> a son and a lover, but more importantly, because Lawrence sees the sexual act as similar to the creative process.[113]

Arguably the "or else" that separates in Paul's mind the sexually and artistically creative is a clue that Paul has yet to arrive at an artistic identity that would allow the sensual and spiritual to unite; that the "or else" is the signature note of the adolescent and romantic "dichotomiser" who still believes that "*all* his passion, *all* his wild blood" must go into one intercourse or the other. The quest for such unity is indeed one of the novel's central themes, but it remains in *Sons and Lovers* a quest unrealised.

As an artist, Paul leaves his Beatrice not because she has bled *him*, but because he has exhausted *her* as a fount of creative inspiration. Here one can agree with Beebe that, ultimately, Paul leaves Miriam because the familiar pattern of artistic development demands such a liberation. "In the typical portrait-of-the-artist novel, the hero, blessed from the beginning with the right temperament, becomes motivated through allegiance to some kind of 'master,' often represented by a father, mother, or lover; then after a period of apprenticeship involving commitment to the standards of his chosen master finds it necessary to break away in order to become master in his own right".[114] Paul does not abandon Miriam because she has failed him as a Muse, but because he is at the stage where he would have to liberate himself from any muse. He does not leave Miriam because he "gets nothing from" her, but because he has taken everything she had to give him.

Lawrence's drama reminds us that the romantic necessity for the developing artist's "thrust toward solitude", his need to work out a "lonely destiny", does little to mitigate the human tragedy for the muse left behind. Nor does the mythical necessity stand in the way of using the call to heroic loneliness as a way for Paul to assuage his conscience. Patricia Meyer Spacks sees Paul's perception of himself at novel's end "as tragically, heroically, alone" as a final example of the way "adolescents "work out their natures and roles".[115] Spacks, assuming that Lawrence is at one with the narrator here, worries that any narrative identification would imply an "endorsement" of Paul's Byronic self-indulgence. But Paul *is* the narrator here, and there is

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[113]Maurice Beebe, *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts: The Artist as Hero in Fiction from Goethe to Joyce* (New York: New York University Press, 1964), 101-102.

[114]Beebe, 110.

[115]Spacks, 248.

little editorialising beyond what is essentially his third-person interior monologue to provide an objective view of his romantic sorrow. Lawrence does seem to detach himself somewhat through the linguistic register of romantic self-indulgence. .

> Beyond the town the country, little smouldering spots for more towns--the sea--the night--on and on! And he had no place in it. Whatever spot he stood on, there he stood alone. . . .Where was he?--one tiny upright speck of flesh, less than an ear of wheat lost in the field. He could not bear it. . . .
>
> But no, he would not give in. Turning sharply, he walked towards the city's gold phosphorescence. His fists were shut, his mouth set fast. he would not take that direction, to the darkness to follow her. He walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly. (464)

It would be foolhardy to suggest that Lawrence doesn't sympathize to some degree with Paul, but that does not exclude the possibility of a touch of authorial mockery. Joyce's Stephen similarly sees loneliness as a necessary step in his development as an artist: "I do not fear to be alone or to be spurned for another or to leave whatever I have to leave".[116] While Joyce applauds the decision, he has left a trail of romantic allusions to suggest Stephen's heroism is adolescently plagiaristic and self-indulgent. Stephen's declaration of independence recalls Alexander Dumas's isolated and mysterious Count of Monte Cristo, Shelley's "companionless" "barren shell of a moon", Byron's histrionic and defiant Childe Harold.[117] While Lawrence's portrait of an artist is decidedly less playful than Joyce's, he is sufficiently detached from his younger fictional self to have an occasional laugh at Paul's adolescent sophistry. Still fresh in the reader's mind's eye are Miriam "in her misery" and a Paul battling with his conscience: "He felt in leaving her, he was defrauding her of life. But he knew that in staying, stifling the inner, desperate man, he was denying his own life. And he did not hope to give life to her by denying his own" (463). Is Lawrence suggesting that the Paul who knows Miriam would gladly give life to him by denying *her* own, exploits the romantic "pattern" of the lonely artist to imaginatively transform cruelty into "heroism"?

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[116] *Portrait*, 247.

[117] All three allusions, which Joyce extends throughout the novel, begin in chapter II, when Stephen escapes the sordidness of Dublin by poring"over a ragged translation of *The Count of Monte Christo*" (98). See also 113, 125.

Miriam, in any case, looks to her patterns for comfort. Having waited for her saviour knight to rescue her from a brutish captivity, she is prepared to"wait and see how it turned out with him" (463). Scott promised her Ivanhoe would finally repay her faithful fulfilment of the "pattern" with marriage. Lawrence confesses seventeen years later in "Give Her a Pattern" that once the woman fulfils his pattern, "the man dislikes her for it"[118]; suggests in *Sons and Lovers* that once the dichotomising adolescent knight has "drunk his fill" at Beatrice's fount of inspiration, "he throws away and smashes the cup" (340). For as the pattern suggests, since his own quest for identity demands he reduce his maiden to a symbol of his aspirations, "the one thing he won't accept her as is a human being". The cruellest dramatic irony, Lawrence suggests, is that Miriam has yet to resign herself to what her archrival had surmised all along:

> "I wait", Mrs Morel said to herself. "I wait, and what I wait for can never come". (14)

Charles Rossman, who finds the essay on patterns consistent with Lawrence's distaste for "relationships which impose an ideal on either partner, or which reduce one person to the implement of the other",[119] attempts to explain why Simone de Beauvoir believes Lawrence himself promulgates "conceptions of women whereby they are denied all claims to personal fulfilment outside their roles as lover, wife, mother cook, and baby sitter".[120] Rossman respects De Beauvoir's claim, but sees a need to distinguish between where Lawrence might encourage Paul's patterning and where he either implicitly condemns it or objectively portrays it as a truth of human nature. "Lawrence, in rendering complex human relationships, remains acutely aware of the way one person responds not only to his own impulses but also to the cues from the other person".[121] The present writer would agree, adding that the acute awareness placed in relief by the bold outlines of his romance-parody places Lawrence--as well as Gide--among Barthes's demystifiers and Girard's "Novelists".

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[118]*Phoenix II*, 536.

[119]Charles Rossman, "Myth and Misunderstanding D. H. Lawrence", *DHL Review* 8 (1975): 255-328.

[120]Quoted by Rossman, 256, from "D. H. Lawrence ou l'orgueil phallique", *Le Deuxième Sexe* (Paris: Gallimard [Folio], 1949, 1976),341-53.

[121]Rossman, 262.

We shall use the term *romantic* for the works which reflect the presence of a mediator without ever revealing it and the term *novelistic* for the works which reveals this presence. It is to the latter to whom this book is primarily devoted.[122]

[122]Girard, 17.

Chapter Four: Alissa as Maiden

C'est à soi-même que chacun prétend le moins ressembler. Chacun se propose un patron, puis l'imite; même il ne choisit pas le patron qu'il imite; il accepte un patron tout choisi. Il y a pourtant, je le crois, d'autres choses à lire, dans l'homme. On n'ose pas. On n'ose pas tourner la page.--Lois de l'imitation; je les appelle: lois de la peur. On a peur de se trouver seul; et l'on ne se trouve pas du tout.

Ménalque to Michel, ***L'Immoraliste*** (118-9)

Je voudrais mourir à présent, vite avant d'avoir compris de nouveau que je suis seule.

Alissa to her journal, ***La Porte étroite*** (178)

1. Le Patron de Béatrice.

Ménalque's metaphor of a "book" to represent the human personality seems even more applicable to Jérôme and Alissa, two characters who appear often to exist only as as so many written words, than it does to the protagonist of *L'Immoraliste*. Certainly Alissa accepts the Beatrice "pattern" from Dante's "book", though it is Jérôme who encourages her to adapt her "self" to this model of the spiritual muse. Once she has submitted to the role her cousin chooses for her, Alissa tragically verifies the strikingly similar laws promulgated in Ménalque's and Lawrence's "pattern" homilies. In allowing Dante and Jérôme to choose her pattern, Alissa forfeits her chance to find her "own self", particularly since her role demands she exist only as a symbol in another's quest for identity. To understand why Alissa dies alone, it is necessary only to add Lawrence's addendum: "The worst of it is, as soon as a woman has really lived up to the man's pattern, the man dislikes her for it".[1]One recalls how Michel abandons Marceline after *she* had lived up to the Madonna-Nurse "pattern".

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[1]"Give Her a Pattern", *Phoenix II*, 537.

Dante introduces the Beatrice pattern to the female images of Romance when one stream of the Provençal conception "flows down into Italy and, through the poets of the Dolce Stil Nuovo, goes to swell the great sea of the *Divine Comedy*".[2] And there, Lewis adds, long before the Christianised Romance of Malory and Scott, "the quarrel between Christianity and the love religion was made up". In the religion of love that began as a parody of the Church's religion, Dante "finds a *modus vivendi* with Christianity and produce[s] a noble fusion of sexual and religious experience".[3] Believing, as does Lewis, that Dante's talent for cultural conciliation was equal to his talent for poetry, Warner holds that he pacified this quarrel without reigniting that between the body and the soul. Dante-the-traveler's realisation that he must purge the dross of lust before he meets Beatrice at heaven's gate should not be confused with the ascetic ideal in Romance, which eventually defines love as the rigourous renunciation of all natural desire.

> It was Dante's unique genius that he was able to achieve a reconciliation of this eternal quarrel between the body and the soul in the sublime synthesis of divinity and humanity that is Beatrice . . . .She is not the tool of defiance against a God who forbids earthly detachments, but the special instrument of mediation between earth and heaven. A woman who had been a child in a crimson dress at a party, and then a married lady of Florence doing the ordinary social rounds of weddings and funerals--as Dante gives us glimpses of in *La Vita Nuova*--Beatrice, even in Paradise, recalls with pride her former beauty.[4]

The "amorous" in Dante's Paradise have transformed their passionate love into *Caritas*, not into the sweetly-painful denial of human nature. "Among all the vices and corruptions to which the appetites lead, Dante has, throughout the *Divine Comedy*, a gentle, lyrical approach to those who have sinned through sensuality".[5] Francesca's tale so moves Dante the protagonist that he swoons from compassion (*Inferno* 5:114-40), while Dante the poet assigns to the third sphere of Paradiso those who nearly lost themselves to lust. "Too sympathetic a soul to confuse chastity and virginity", Warner adds, "on the terrace of the lustful in purgatory, as the

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[2]Lewis, 23.
[3]Ibid., 21.
[4]Warner, 162.
[5]Ibid., 164.

souls troop past, they cry out examples of chastity; among them are married couples who lived together virtuously (*Purgatorio* 25:134-5)". Too full-blooded a man to confuse sin and nature, Dante's moral cornerstone was "*Lo naturale è sempre senza errore* (The natural is always without error) (*Purgatorio* 17:94)".[6]

Confusing Beatrice's chastity and the ascetic's denial of nature is but one of the pattern-makers' distortions of Dante's heroine. At least as dangerous for the young woman encouraged to adapt herself to what is in fact a travesty of Beatrice are the three obstacles to self-knowledge outlined by Lawrence and Ménalque: the impossibility of finding her authentic self when she emulates a model; the related impossibility of actively pursuing a transcendent harmony when serving as a static symbol of another's quest; the "hysteria" caused when, as soon as she lives up to one pattern, the male demands another. Dante's Beatrice is a "full-blooded and hot tempered woman he knew and loved on earth";[7] unlike the purely symbolic woman of twelfth century literature, Ferrante observes, Beatrice represents "Dante's capacity to see mankind as one, to accept women as friends (guides and critics) as well as inspirations and temptations, in short, as human beings".[8] She serves as the inspiration for Dante's quest for the transcendent only after she has successfully completed her own. And, unlike Paul, Michel and Jérôme, who abandon their lovers once they have fulfilled their patterns, Dante, both as poet and protagonist, remains faithful to the Beatrice he has recognized as a "real human being".

The distorted Beatrice pattern Jérôme foists upon Alissa speaks of a perceptual habit not to be confused with his obtuseness. Just as he finds whatever he most needs in the people around him, he hears in language only what comforts him, remains deaf to all that threatens. He borrows the serenity and order suggested by Baudelaire's "L'Invitation au voyage" to fashion his vision of Alissa's room, but fails to see the original's "luxe" et "volupté"; he, as Roddey Reid notes, misinterprets Pastor Vautier's exhortation "for "young listeners to practice moral discipline and follow the dictates of heterosexual marriage" to encourage a strangely erotic and

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[6]Ibid., 167.
[7]Ibid., 171.
[8]*Women as Image in Medieval Literature*, 15.

masochistic asceticism.[9] He abstracts the sensually normal Alissa as a bodiless Beatrice to serve as the object that will inspire his quest for a higher self.

In tracing the development of the Beatrice figure in Gide's early works, Vinio Rossi finds that Jérôme is typical of other Gide narrators who both emphasise disproportionately the importance of chastity and refuse to see their muses as real human beings. These Beatrices are not, in fact, symbols of God but, as Ferrante sees in Romance's portrayal of women before Dante, mirrors of male psychological problems.[10] *Les Cahiers d'André Walter,* as will *La Porte étroite,* "brings to mind Dante's *Vita Nuova* because of their shared adolescent spirituality and fervour, but especially because both plots hinge on absence. Like Beatrice, Emmanuèle removes herself from her lover's presence by marriage and ultimately by death".[11] Emmanuèle begins with Alissa as the spiritual muse--"Puisqu'il faut que je la perde, que je te trouve au moins, mon Dieu,--et que tu me bénisses d'avoir suivi la route étroite".[12] But Walter "cannot maintain Emmanuèle in the Beatrice role for she evokes simultaneous carnal and spiritual urges".[13] In the remaining "oeuvres de jeunesse" through *Le Prométhée mal enchaîné,* "Emmanuèle changes from a straightforward Beatrice figure into Angèle, her parody. Gide maintains her in an ironic stance" because her "healthy hormonal effervescence" keep her from fully realizing the Beatrice pattern.[14] Rossi believes it "clear cut" that Alissa "functions as a proxy for both Jérôme and the narrator" of *Paludes,* who is torn between fear of and attraction to sensual experience. While Rossi never delineates the Beatrice figure in *La Porte étroite* , he seems to be suggesting that Alissa, like Emmanuèle , "functions as a projection" of the male narrator's self; so that instead of guiding their Dantes to the "Other and to God", from "Amour (Eros) to Caritas", these Beatrices return him to himself and Narcissism.[15]

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[9]Roddey Reid, "Modernist Aesthetics and Familial Textuality: Gide's *Strait is the Gate*", *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature* 13.2 (1989), 165.

[10]*Women as Image in Medieval Literature,* 1.

[11]Vinio Rossi, "Erato and Angèle: The Beatrice Figure in the Early Works of Claudel and Gide", *Claudel Studies* 4 (1977), 39.

[12]Rossi quotes from *Oeuvres Complètes , I ,* 30.

[13]Rossi, 39.

[14]Ibid., 40-41.

[15]Ibid., 41, 45.

Rossi assumes that, because of the "cataclysmic rebirth" of Gide's sensualism during his trip to North Africa and the confirmation of his homosexuality, "for all intents and purposes" the Beatrice figure "is all but assimilated and neutralized in Gide's work by the turn of the century".[16] It would seem, however, that Gide, looking back to the sexual confusion he felt prior to this "confirmation", adapts rather than neutralises his Beatrice for this present purpose. For while Gide uses the Beatrice pattern in his early works to study the importance of the female image in the male narrators' quests for identity, he employs Beatrice in *La Porte étroite* to underline equally the destructive effects of Jérôme's narcissism and his failure to understand his sexual inadequacies on a *woman's* quest for identity. Walter dismisses Emmanuèle from the Beatrice role because she incites sensual as well as spiritual urges, whereas Alissa removes *herself* from the part because *she* experiences the carnal urges that the sexually impassive Jérôme cannot feel. Assuming that Jérôme too is waging war with passionate desire, she believes herself unworthy of the Beatrician task.

Jérôme prefaces his abstraction of Alissa as a mirror of his "psychological problem" by confessing that his perceptual deficiencies allow none of the physical Alissa to interfere with his designs for her as his bodiless spiritual muse: "Je ne puis décrire un visage; les traits m'échappent, et jusqu'à la couleur des yeux" (22). What he can remember are expressions, tacit 'communication' that he can interpret at will.

> je ne revois que l'expression presque triste déjà de son sourire et que la ligne de ses sourcils, si extraordinairement relevés au-dessus des yeux, écartés de l'oeil en grand cercle. Je n'ai vu les pareils nulle part.... si pourtant: dans une statuette florentine de l'époque de Dante; et je me figure volontiers que Béatrix enfant avait des sourcils très largement arqués comme ceux-là. Ils donnaient au regard, à tout l'être, une expression d'interrogation à la fois anxieuse et confiante, -- oui, d'interrogation passionnée. Tout, en elle, n'était que question et qu'attente... Je vous dirai comment cette interrogation s'empara de moi, fit ma vie. (22)

Having emptied Alissa of her physical self, then, Jérôme proceeds to remove her further from her own reality through two layers of abstraction, likening her first to a statue and then to Dante's heroine. Clearly it is Jérôme

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[16]Rossi, 41.

rather than Alissa who has taken possession ("s'emparer") of *her* life. Eric Marty finds the thrice mentioned "interrogation" around which Jérôme concentrates his love for Alissa to be "une bien curieuse attraction, car elle semble d'un côté aspirer toutes les forces de Jérôme à se projeter en elle et en même temps interdire la possibilité même qu'il lui soit apporté quelque réponse".[17] But Jérôme needs no responses to his projected self, since, in assigning Alissa the Beatrice pattern, they have already been provided in his travesty of Dante's work.

One of the principal matters of enquiry Jérôme finds in those celestially-arching eyebrows concerns his preparedness for a Dantesque pilgrimage to Paradise, where, he claims to his Beatrice, "je n'y parviendrai pas sans toi" (129). His insistence that her questioning took possession of him, and that he was attracted and held by a charm beyond physical beauty ("j'étais requis et retenu"), recalls Dante's description in *La Vita Nuova* of his first perception of the eight year old Beatrice. *D'allora innanzi dico che Amore segnoreggiò la mia anima, /la quale fu sì tosto a lui disponsata.*[18] (From that time onwards love held dominion over my soul,/ which was thus bound to him early in life) (*LVN* 2:7)[19] Just as Dante believed that his human love for Beatrice provided a glimpse of heavenly love, Jérôme believes that behind Alissa's door lies 'un avant-goût de la félicité du ciel" (28). Though Alissa suspects early that Jérôme's understanding of communion in God--"c'est se retrouver éperdument dans une même chose adorée" (36)--confuses means and end and his own image with God's, she concedes to her cousin's plaint, "mais c'est toi qui me montres la route". But since he sees his own reflection in his Beatrice pattern rather than "the image of things beyond itself"[20] that Dante sees in Beatrice, the path can only return to himself.

Gide's structure and its striking parallels with Dante's in *The Divine Comedy* provides the clue to the particular "male psychological problem" around which Jérôme fashions his Beatrice pattern. Three times Jérôme turns his thoughts to Alissa immediately after recalling how Lucile had threatened his incipient sexual identity. Knecht perceives that "his first real portrait" of

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[17]Eric Marty, "A propos de *La Porte étroite* , Répétition et remémoration: *Le Nouvel Abailard, Revue des science humaines* 70 (1985), 86.

[18]Dante, *La Vita Nuova,* ed. Natalino Sapegno, 2nd ed. (Milano: Mursia, 1968), 4.

[19]Dante, *The New Life,* trans. and ed. William Anderson (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1964),.37.

[20]Charles Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice* (London:Faber, 1944), 7.

Alissa "is preceded by the significant incident" between Jérôme and Alissa's mother, the Creole Lucile Bucolin". Jérôme feels he "has been soiled by premature physical contact with Woman . . . . This harm, its effect on Jérôme, will be important in determining the future course of his relationship with his cousin Alissa'.[21] Indeed, Jérôme-the-narrator's opening disclaimer implies he had consciously selected every detail of his Beatrice portrait to neutralize every detail in his portrait of her mother. "Sans doute, [Alissa] ressemblait beaucoup à sa mère; mais son regard était d'expression si différente que je ne m'avisai de cette ressemblance que plus tard" (21-2).

Jérôme, even more of an adolescent dichotomiser than Paul, admits that "Lucile Bucolin était très belle"; but once he finds her physical beauty threatening, he uses his now familiar perceptive screening to ignore the daughter's attractiveness: "Qu'Alissa Bucolin fût jolie, c'est ce dont je ne savais m'apercevoir encore; j'étais requis et retenu près d'elle par un charme autre que celui de la simple beauté" (21). Jérôme's portrait of Lucile hovers around the potentially erogenous, descending from the back of the neck to the waist: "cheveux crépelés `a demi croulés sur la nuque", "ses épaules nues", "bras nu, "décolletage", "ces corsages légers et largement ouverts", "l'échancrure du corsage", "la ceinture" (16-20). Consistent with Dante's "style of portraiture",[22] Alissa's portrait concentrates on the eyes, Beatrice's "two balconies" of the soul",[23] and the smile. Jérôme remembers Lucile's laughter, which he associates with the hateful exaggeration of sin (28); to Alissa he grants instead a nearly sad smile, "son sourire enfantin" (32), Beatrice's "miraculous smile" signalling her power as heaven's mediator: *Quel ch'ella par quando un poco sorride,/ non si pò dicer nè tenere a mente,/ sì è novo miracolo e gentile.* (When lightly she smiles, what is revealed/ cannot be told nor remembered by choice, /So rare a miracle in her is wrought.) (*LVN* 21:12-14). Lucile descends toward the horizontal--"assise de côté", "s'allongeait . . . sur un sofa ou dans un hamac" (17); In Alissa, even the eyebrows--"si extraordinairement relevés", "très largement arqués"--aspire toward the celestial. And like Beatrice in the *Paradiso,* whose "increasing beauty" and intensity of light mark "each ascent from height to greater

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[21]Knecht, 641.

[22]Williams, 65: "The two points to which Dante chooses to direct his attention are the eyes and the mouth."

[23]Dante, *Convivio* ed. Gustavo Rudolfo Ceriello (Milano: Rizzoli, 1952) 3:9, 180.

height",[24] Alissa's beauty increasingly dazzles Jérôme the more she renounces her earthly nature. On the night she hopes to sacrifice herself for Juliette's happiness, Jérôme finds "le sourire qui l'illuminait restait si sereinement beau" (63); by the final encounter in the garden, she has so shed the mortal coil that her beauty recalls Beatrice's, "so shining that if it were not tempered, [Dante's] mortal powers in its blaze would be as a branch split by a thunderbolt". *(Se non si temperasse, tanto splende,/ che 'l tuo mortal podere, al suo fulgore,/ sarebbe fronda che trono scoscende.)* (*Paradiso* 21:10-12). Jérôme remembers "l'extraordinaire éclat de son regard inondait son visage d'une surhumaine, d'une angélique beauté" (151). Now that there remains in Alissa nothing of the sensual to threaten Jérôme, he "abandons" himself for the first time to his "passion".

> Et tout à coup, la serrant éperdument, presque brutalement dans mes bras, j'écrassai de baisers ses lèvres. Un instant comme abandonnée je la tins à demi renversée contre moi". (151)

Lucile's playful enticement of Jérôme precedes his portrait of the bodiless Alissa, just as the "Rein of Lust" precedes the "Angel of Chastity" (*Purgatorio* 26-27). Similarly, Dante "reproache[s] in righteous zeal/ Eve's fatal recklessness--How could she dare?" (Purgatorio 29:23-24)--just as Jérôme reviles the *femme fatale* who loses the earthly paradise for him and the Bucolins. "Lucile Bucolin, je voudrais ne plus vous en vouloir, oublier un instant que vous avez fait tant de mal..." (19). Jérôme runs from Lucile, who has passed her bare arm round his neck and put her hand into his shirt, to the kitchen garden where, he remembers, "dans un petit citerneau du potager, je trempai mon mouchoir, j'appliquai sur mon front, lavai, frottai mes joues, mon cou, tout ce que cette femme avait touché" (20). Jérôme's ablutions in the waters of Alissa's "potager"[25] recall the immersion of Dante by Matilda in the waters of the river Lethe that cleanse even the memory of sin (*Purgatorio* 3:99-102); Jérôme symbolically attempts to return, like Dante, to the Garden of Eden's pre-sexuality. Since Gide has yet to reveal that Jérôme associates Alissa with the "potager", he makes the parallel

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[24]John Sinclair, ed. and trans. *The Divine Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958, 1971), *Paradiso*, 128. All *Comedy* quotations and translations are taken from this text unless otherwise noted.

[25]See chapter I, 14.

structurally by having Jérôme scrub scrupulously any trace of the sensual Lucile from Alissa's portrait.

Gide's structure reinforces the Dantesque symmetry a second time when Jérôme climbs furiously the symbolic stairs to Alissa's room after he has glimpsed the tryst between Lucile and her lover. As Knecht argues, it is Jérôme, not Alissa, who, because of his sexual fears, imposes ascetic renunciation as the necessary criterion for their celestial quest: "Ivre d'amour, de pitié, d'un indistinct mélange d'enthousiasme, d'abnégation, de vertu j'en appelais à Dieu de toutes mes forces et m'offrais" (26). Gide ends the chapter with a third reminder that Jérôme, in reaction to his fear of Lucile, defines both Alissa's bodiless role as guide and the ascetic narrowness of their path. In a dream-like vision, Jérôme tailors Pastor Vautier's sermon to fit his own psychological needs:

> Je revoyais ma tante étendue, riante; je voyais le brillant officier rire aussi... et l'idée même du rire, de la joie, se faissait blessante, outrageuse, devenait comme l'odieuse exagération du péché! . . . Et le pasteur ramenait le début du texte, et je voyais cette porte étroite par laquelle il fallait s'efforcer d'entrer. . . . Et cette porte devenait encore la porte même d'Alissa; pour entrer je me réduisais, me vidais de tout ce qui subsistait en moi d'égoïsme...*Car étroite est la voie qui conduit à la Vie.* (28)

Gide signals the travesty of Jérôme's Beatrice pattern by separating Jérôme's needs from Dante's as much as he aligns the trajectories of their quests. Dante is an experienced and sanguine man who, because he has come to see that Caritas transcends Eros, enters the wall of refining fire in the name of a woman he believes to be in heaven. Jérôme is a sexually insecure pre-adolescent who imposes an unnatural platonic ideal upon a young woman who has yet to awaken to natural desire. Because of his own predisposition to "confuse happiness" and ascetic "virtue" he places an unnatural restraint upon a young woman he himself recognises as vibrantly "natural": "Tout, dans son âme sans apprêt, restait de la plus naturelle beauté. Sa vertu gardait tant d'aisance et de grâce qu'elle semblait un abandon" (32). While Jérôme admits that his parents' Puritan training had predisposed *him* to confound austere "virtue" with happiness, he convinces himself, "mais bientôt mon amour pour Alissa m'enfonça délibérément dans ce sens" (30).

In emptying the "natural" from both Dante and Alissa, Jérôme is typical of so many others in the Western intellectual system whom the poet "inspired . . . to emulate him, only to arrive at that crippled travesty of both Plato and love termed Platonic love". Warner argues that "Dante was aware of the sublime potential in the things of the world and he therefore used them to turn his eyes heavenwards instead of following the growing tradition of eschewing the visible world in pursuit of the invisible".[26] Jérôme, in reducing Alissa to an implement for his quest, taught the "natural" young woman to mistrust the world altogether by creating for her an impossible pattern. Pierre Lachasse describes Jérôme's perception of Alissa as "la création d'un être imaginaire, sanctifié et sublimé. . . . Placée sur son piédestal, Alissa ne se peut pas se tromper, elle est la perfection même".[27] Aware of her earthly "imperfections", then, it is hardly surprising that Alissa looks to her own travesty of a Beatrician solution, one that would allow her to obviate the natural altogether. As if she had overheard Jérôme's purple apostrophe, "O feinte exquise de l'amour . . . par quel secret chemin tu nous menas du rire aux pleurs et de la plus naïve joie à l'exigence de la vertu!" (46), she extracts the ultimate deferral of love from her dream of death:

> "Je pense qu'elle [la mort] peut rapprocher . . .
> oui, rapprocher ce qui a été séparé pendant la vie.
> " (47)

Sadder than the inevitable failure of Jérôme's quest is that the unnatural pattern he fashions for his muse destroys her chances to arrive at her authentic self; for Alissa, more than either of the male questing protagonists in the twin *récits*, is shown to be naturally capable of attaining spiritual and sensual harmony, the ideal equilibrium Gide implies through the "excesses" studied in the two works.[28] In search of an antidote for the oppressive puritanism of his mother and the sterile academicism of his father, Michel concentrates on the body to the exclusion of the soul.[29] To compensate for

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[26]Warner, 171.

[27]Pierre Lachasse, "Le Récit de Jérôme dans *La Porte étroite*: une thématique de la séparation", *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 1 (1988), 70- 1.

[28]*Journal*, 7 February 1912, 365-66. "Qui donc persuaderai-je que ce livre [*La Porte étroite*] est jumeau de *L'Immoraliste*, et que les deux sujets ont grandi concurrement dans mon esprit, l'excès de l'un trouvant dans l'excès de l'autre une permission secrète et tous deux se maintenant en équilibre".

[29]"Je vais parler longuement de mon corps. Je vais en parler tant, qu'il vous semblera tout d'abord que j'oublie la part de l'esprit. Ma négligence en ce récit est volontaire; elle

his parents' oppressive puritanism and the sexual insecurity exacerbated by his experience with Lucile, Jérôme takes refuge in the platonic at the expense of the natural. On her first trip beyond the restrictive walls of Fongueusemare, Alissa senses that nature, "si profondément chrétien à Fongueusemare", was still "religious" in the "mythological" south (160). Even on the night she disqualifies herself as Jérôme's celestial guide, Alissa intuitively arrives at a definition of love that would patch the quarrel between heaven and earth: "Combien heureuse doit être l'âme pour qui vertu se confondrait avec amour! Parfois je doute s'il est d'autre vertu que d'aimer, d'aimer le plus possible et toujours plus..." (165). But since Jérôme has failed to respond to the inclinations of her heart, she returns to Jérôme's original confounding of virtue and restraint--"Il m'était aussi naturel de me contraindre qu'à d'autres de s'abandonner" (30)-- a definition he signals to Alissa on the day he "sanctifies" the beginning of their love in Pastor Vautier's chapel. Claiming that the sermon had keyed him to a pitch of moral tension, he establishes the pattern of separation by "fleeing" from Alissa just as he had fled from Lucile. "Je m'enfuis sans chercher à voir ma cousine--par fierté, voulant déjà mettre mes résolutions (car j'en avais pris) à l'épreuve, et pensant la mieux mériter en m'éloignant d'elle aussitôt" (29).

Alissa finally concedes in her journal that "la vertu ne m'apparaît plus que comme une résistance à l'amour" (165), just before she "consummates her sacrifice". When her father, seeing her stretched out on the sofa, innocently remarks that he had momentarily mistaken daughter for mother, Alissa immediately recalls the natural inclination which had provoked *her* to flee from Jérôme earlier that evening. Ironically it is during their long anticipated Easter meeting (124), the season of the Passion during which the Christ-like Beatrice guides Dante to heaven, that Alissa fears she has begun to impede Jérôme's spiritual progress.

> Jérôme lisait par-dessus mon épaule, debout, appuyé contre mon fauteuil, penché sur moi. Je ne pouvais le voir mais sentais son haleine et comme la chaleur et le frémissement de son corps. Je feignais de continuer ma lecture, mais je ne comprenais plus; je ne distinguais même plus les lignes; un trouble si étrange s'était emparé de moi que j'ai dû me lever de ma chaise, en hâte, tandis que je le pouvais encore. J'ai pu quitter quelques instants la pièce sans qu'heureusement il se

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était réelle là-bas. Je n'avais pas de force assez pour entretenir double vie; l'esprit et le reste, pensais-je, j'y songerai plus tard quand j'irai mieux" (38).

> soit rendu compte de rien... Mais quand, un peu plus tard, seule dans le salon, je m'étais étendue sur ce canapé où papa trouvait que je ressemblais à ma mère, précisément alors c'est à elle que je pensais . . . . Pauvre Jérôme! Si pourtant il savait que parfois il n'aurait qu'un geste à faire, et que ce geste parfois je l'attends... (165)

But Jérôme, who even in their first edenic summer believed their love was fuelled solely by "talks and reading", is incapable of imagining that Alissa's physical desire could disturb the cerebral desires of discourse. Mistaking Jérôme's sensual impassivity for heroic renunciation, and fearing that Jérôme's campaign to rid the daughter of every vestige of the mother has failed, Alissa removes herself as his Beatrician guide.

> Hélas! Je ne le comprends que trop bien à présent: entre Dieu et lui, il n'est pas d'autre obstacle que moi-même. Si, peut-être, *comme il me le dit* , son amour pour moi l'inclina vers Dieu tout d'abord, à présent cet amour l'empêche: il s'attarde à moi, me préfère, et je deviens l'idole qui le retient de s'avancer plus loin dans la vertu. (Emphasis mine.) (166)

Alissa's insight that Jérôme had talked her into the Beatrician pattern underlines how her lucidity continually serves as a foil to Jérôme's obtuseness. While she does not acknowledge in the journal entry that it is Jérôme who has fashioned her into an "idol", she implies as much after the disastrous autumn reunion following Jérôme's release from the military. Alissa had long suspected, she tells her cousin, "que ton amour était surtout un amour de tête, un bel entêtement intellectuel de tendresse et de fidelité" (121). The following autumn she accuses Jérôme of having fallen in love with a spiritual pattern of his own making, in essence of having fallen in love, as Rossi suspects of all of Gide's Dantes, with a projection of himself: "Tu tombes amoureux d'un fantôme . . . . D'une figure imaginaire" (143).

Charles Williams, in his endlessly helpful *The Figure of Beatrice,* emphasizes the proper use of a spiritual muse in the Dantesque tradition. The "stupor" Dante experiences when he first sees Beatrice produced "a sense of reverence and a desire to know more, a noble awe and a noble curiosity". The image produced by recalling her was, firstly, "an image of an exterior fact and not an interior desire. . . . Secondly, the outer exterior shape was understood to be an image of things beyond itself, " things that urge the

"soul to its ordained end".[30] Francis Fergusson uses Bonaventure's *The Mind's Road to God* to emphasise a similar distinction between incestuously circular narcissism and Dante's transcendence of ego. :

> Certain it is that the spirit of Dante the traveler "moves" successively in the three directions that Bonaventura says the mind must take: outside ourselves (*extra nos*), then inside ourselves (*intra nos*) and finally above ourselves (*super nos*).[31]

Both interpretations of Dante's quest, then, suggest he places two checks on the threat of narcissism: he ensures that the initial image to which he aspires is external and not a self-serving invention; he recognizes that his attempt to attain the image's characteristic qualities will lead him, first to an interior appraisal of his own shortcomings and, then, to a further attempt to approach the superior state the image represents. Jérôme's tardy confession implies he has failed on all three counts; he uses an internally created image to *avoid* confronting his shortcomings, thus returning to his own inferior state. Disconcerted by Alissa's ascetic "dépoétisation" and ignorant that he has encouraged it, Jérôme admits:

> Eh! sans doute elle avait raison! je ne chérissais plus qu'un fantôme; l'Alissa que j'avais aimée n'était plus . . . . Cette dépoétisation affreuse, devant quoi tout mon coeur se glaçait, n'était rien, après tout, que le retour au naturel; lentement si je l'avais surélevée, si je m'étais formé d'elle une idole, l'ornant de tout ce dont j'étais épris, que restait-il de mon travail, que ma fatigue?... Sitôt *abandonnée* à elle-même, Alissa était revenue à son niveau, médiocre niveau, où je me retrouvais moi-même, mais où je ne la désirais plus. (144-5; emphases mine.)

Typically, even at his most lucid Jérôme sees but partial truths, leaving Gide to imply the rest through the irony of language. Now that Alissa has an intimation of her authentic self, the Beatrice pattern Jérôme created no longer exists. A sadder equivocation is that, too long troubled by Jérôme's unnatural constraints, Alissa will never be able return to the "*naturelle* beauté" and "graceful" "*abandon*" that had first attracted him to her. Jérôme admits to appropriating Alissa for his own ends but refuses to take responsibility for the tragic results of his narcissism; hiding behind the

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[30]Wiliams, 7.

[31]Francis Fergusson, *Dante* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), 135.

passive voice of his syntax, he refuses to admit that, as Lawrence might have predicted, once Alissa lives up to his pattern by removing every vestige of her mother's physical beauty, *he* "abandoned" her.

> Ah! combien cet effort épuisant de vertu m'apparaissait absurde et chimérique, pour la rejoindre à ces hauteurs où mon unique effort l'avait placée. Un peu moins orgueilleux, notre amour eût été facile...mais que signifiait désormais l'obstination dans un amour sans objet; c'était être entêté, ce n'était plus être fidèle. Fidèle à quoi?-- à une erreur. Le plus sage n'était-il pas de m'avouer que je m'étais trompé?... (145)

Even a decade after Alissa's death, Jérôme unwittingly admits to Juliette that he has remained faithful to only the mirror image of what he had hoped to see in his Beatrice.

> "Si je te comprends bien, c'est au souvenir d'Alissa que tu prétends rester fidèle".
> Je fus un instant sans répondre.
> "Peut-être plutôt à l'idée qu'elle se faisait de moi..." (181-2)

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2. The Colonised Maiden

Gide's detailed development of the Beatrice pattern helps to underscore that he faults Jérôme more than he does Alissa for establishing the destructive tenor of asceticism in their relationship. Still to be explained, however, are the readiness and ease with which she assumes the role of disembodied celestial guide. In Girard's terms, how does Alissa come to forfeit her own desires for those of her literary mediators; and why does she, like Miriam, so readily mistake literary constructs for life?

If Alissa's particular literary escape brings to mind Emma Bovary, "who desires through the romantic heroines who fill her imagination",[32] her motivation aligns her more with Don Quixote, an idealist whose nobility of spirit needs more than his recalcitrant reality can offer him. In Gide's

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[32]Girard, 5.

crumbling world of an effete bourgeoisie, rescuing knights take on the spirit of the age. Alissa could either moderate her desire to align it with the reality of her object (Jérôme), or maintain her desire at its natural pitch by mistaking Jérôme for the romantic heroes described in her literature. Given the moment of Jérôme's 'rescue', Alissa not surprisingly opts for the latter. Her "delicate" knight takes his plagiarized vow "d'abriter cette enfant contre la peur, contre le mal, contre la vie" (26) at the very moment the entire responsibility for the ancestral home has fallen on her fifteen-year-old shoulders: with her Uncle Palissier dead and her father in emasculated dotage, her aunt in mourning and her mother, the last promise of fertility among the adults, interested more in *galanterie* than in maternity, Alissa must contend with the responsibility of Fongueusemare and all its orphans.[33] Hardly a position in which to question the authenticity of her Launcelot.

Denied, like Miriam, the chance for education because she is a girl, Alissa finds her opportunities to see the world beyond the walls of Fongueusemare closed further because she is a woman. She has no choice but to perceive the external reality of the male world through the eyes of Jérôme, who, as we have already seen, looks to "language as a superior reality that shelters him from" reality.[34] Thus, one whose deficiency allows him to feel desire only for abstractions selects the literary abstractions for one who has nothing in reality to fulfil her "natural" desires. And, like Paul, Jérôme exploits the accident of gender to gain ascendancy over his pupil. He has already suffered from his one real experience with Lucile, a woman whose books are "always closed" (18), when he was looking for the shelter of language" ("j'entre au salon chercher un livre; elle y était"); he will ensure with Alissa that their relationship centres around the open text. During that first "splendid" summer of their romance, Jérôme remembers that "les seuls événements étaient des conversations, des lectures..." (46). "It is he", notes Emily Apter, "in the guise of the intellectual mentor, who supervises her reading and encourages her textual expositions as part of her education. It is he who takes up precious hours in the early days of their courtship reading to her aloud. . . . It is also he who inspires the sublimation of passion into

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[33]See Reid, 157-58.
[34]Babcock, 40.

writing enthusiastic commentaries on his subject of studies."[35] Until she frees herself from her father to experience the sensual South (ironically to play the nurse to Juliette and her new niece), Alissa must rely on Jérôme's letters and the little bookcase in her bedroom for an exterior vision. And Jérôme is careful to see that nothing in those shelves would threaten his desires. His claim that her favourite works--"livres de chevet"--occupied the shelves implies she chose the volumes freely; in fact, "cette petite bibliothèque s'était lentement formée moitié par les livres que je lui avais donnés, moitié par d'autres que nous avions lus ensemble" (137).

Alissa assumes that Jérôme has expanded her world: "O mon frère! merci pour m'avoir fait connaître et comprendre et aimer tout ceci" (103); Gide suggests he has closed it further. In the attempt to shore up a mediocre and decaying reality with a dream world of language, Alissa reads and creates herself into an escape that ironically imprisons all her natural inclinations. Sonnenfeld says of Jérôme and Alissa that "the book has so long been opened that it has become a part of them." Their casual quoting of the Western canon and their ability to weave its words into the very fabric of their lives suggest "they have made a book out of their lives."[36] That the insistent theme of Alissa's book is the renunciation of her authentic self cannot be laid entirely at the feet of Jérôme. The theme of the disembodied spiritual heroine repeats itself in the canon because, as Lawrence notes in his "patterns" essay, male authors create the type for needs not so very different from Jérôme's.[37] Since Gide implies throughout the *récit* that Alissa is dependent upon the act of reading as "the only form of knowledge",[38] she inevitably creates herself from materials that aggravate her dependence. In both the book she has made out of her life and the journal in which she refines herself as text, Alissa has unwittingly subjected herself, Reid suggests, to "the secondary, dependent 'feminine' position":

> Her words are not entirely her own either; for *her* text is replete with quotations drawn from the classics of the French canon and the Bible--other men's words and writing. Indeed

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[35]Emily S. Apter, *André Gide and the Codes of Homotextuality*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1987), 131.

[36]Sonnenfeld, "On Readers and Reading", 177.

[37]See footnote 95 in chapter four. **[LAST EDITING]**

[38]Sonnenfeld, "On Readers and Reading", 177.

> her bedroom, that space of presumable female desire and feminine interiority, has been transformed into a veritable library of (male-penned) books. Alissa's writing reveals itself as colonized by dominant male discourse. . . . Alissa designates a literary impasse, the paralyzing negativity of sedimented past literary practices that were constitutive of modernism's peculiar historical situation. Alissa offers the spectacle of modernism's dilemma: the impotence of those who had tried to "make new" when faced with crushing cultural tradition.
>
> Not only does Alissa connote the ideological and aesthetic problem--familial discourse and the literary canon--but also its radical, deadly solution in the "comforting", if gruesome form of "female" masochism.[39]

Thus when Jérôme initiates a romantic discourse characterised by separation and renunciation of physical desire, Alissa repeats back to him "the same rhetoric of deferral and denial"[40] to which her colonizers have given the face of the "natural." And when she attempts to free herself (her text) from Jérôme's domination (her rebellious preference for the "purer" poets or the "humbler" religious souls), she can look only to other texts that encourage "female masochism". The gender of the authors of the works of popular piety that Alissa claims to favour over Pascal is not indicated, though it is interesting that she refers to them as feminine--"d'humbles âme", "les pauvres âmes", "la société desquelles je me plais" (138)-- and describes their attitudes as her own. It is as if Alissa hoped these texts might constitute a female society in opposition to Jérôme's Pascal and the rest of the male canon.

> Les pauvres âmes que voici--et elle se retournait vers ses livres--seraient bien embarrassées de dire si elles sont jansénistes, quiétistes ou je ne sais quoi de différent. Elles s'inclinent devant Dieu commes des herbes qu'un vent presse, sans malice, sans trouble, sans beauté. Elles se tiennent pour peu remarquables et savent qu'elles ne doivent quelque valeur qu'à leur effacement devant Dieu. (139-40)

A Pyrrhic rebellion to be sure, since these texts ("Elles") encourage the same female patterns of passivity and self-effacement outlined by the "crushing" male colonizers.

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[39]Reid, 164-65.
[40]Reid, 163.

The specifically religious texts will be saved for the discussion of Alissa as martyr, though it is important to note that the male-penned texts on Romance encourage the Alissas to adopt the pattern of the spiritual muse by surrounding the lovers in a "religious aura."[41] The fathers of the literary canon resemble the Fathers of the church, too, in prescribing for their female readers the suppression of the "natural" (authentic) self, recommending virginity and celibacy over sexual communion and marriage, and in suggesting , finally, that love finds its highest rewards in death.

If Jérôme and Alissa hear the call to deferral and denial in Dante, they will surely find it in Goethe as well. Hoping to find the "belle apparence de l'amour" reflected in their own souls, Jérôme and Alissa recall Goethe's reflections on Mme de Stein; "Il serait beau de voir se refléchir le monde dans cette âme" (44). Jérôme's subsequent theft of Goethe's conceit emphasizes the burden of platonic purity his narcissism places on Alissa. With double-edged insensitivity, he directs his poetry to Juliette, but in the hope that Alissa will overhear:

> Oh! si seulement nous pouvions, nous penchant sur l'âme qu'on aime, voir en elle, comme en un miroir, quelle image nous y posons! lire en autrui comme en nous-mêmes! mieux qu'en nous-mêmes! Quelle tranquillité dans la tendresse! quelle pureté dans l'amour!...(49-50).

Beyond Goethe's biography, an Alissa would find two options for the spiritual muse in Faust's Gretchen and Werther's Lotte. The former, as religious and naive as Alissa, steps down from the platonic pedestal when she renounces her chastity in a moment of natural inclinations. The prison cell of her martyrdom resembles essentially the naked cell of Alissa's 'convent", though Faust, unlike Jérôme, makes an heroic attempt to save her. A penitent Beatrice, Gretchen is rewarded by the task of guiding her lover to the highest circle of Paradise. Lotte, Werther's earthly "saint" who elevates him beyond the merely mortal,[42] would encourage, too, Alissa's hope for a heavenly reunion. In a love made impossible by her engagement with Albert, Lotte holds out the possibility of a divine solution to an earthly dilemma. "'There will be life for us after death, Werther!' she went on, her voice full of the most exalted emotion: 'but will we find each other again?

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[41]See Vidas, 14.
[42]*Werther* , 41.

and know each other?'"[43] In an agony-filled letter that recalls, as do many of his epistles, Alissa's journal-letters to Jérôme,[44] the suicidal Werther responds, "I fly to meet you and remain with you in a perpetual embrace in the sight of the Eternal."[45]

"There were fears for Lotte's life"[46] after Werther's suicide, but no reason to believe she would elect the martyrdom enacted by Gide's Alissa and Corneille's Polyeucte. Following Gide's indication that he hoped to criticize in *La Porte étroite* a dangerous sort of "cornélienisme gratuit", [47] more than one critic has suspected something beyond a literary error behind Alissa's mistaken identification of Racine's verse as Corneille's.

> Quel charme vainqueur du monde
> Vers Dieu m'élève aujourd'hui?
> Malheureux l'homme qui fonde
> Sur les hommes son appui! (93)

Sonnenfeld speculates Alissa would like to possess the Corneillian mastery of her passions when, in fact "elle n'est que racinienne, victime de ses passions et de ses illusions.[48] The author of "*Le Cid* and *Polyeucte*, those master texts of hope, of full waiting", Robert Green believes, sits "squarely in the middle of *La Porte étroite*, foreshadow[ing]. . . Alissa's bleak, lonely death in a state of utter despair, of empty waiting."[49] Certainly Gide's allusive ploy allows him to have it both ways, suggesting a nice religious girl like Alissa would rather look to a Polyeucte's victory over the dependence on a mortal lover than to a Phèdre's destructive submission to her passions. In taking Alissa back to the fountainhead of French tragedy, Gide reminds us, too, how little the dichotomising Fathers of French literature, like the Fathers of Italian and German literature, have explored the potential female territory

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[43]Ibid., 70.

[44]This is particularly true of Alissa's staccato, increasingly troubled letters in Book two, when she finds before her everywhere Jérôme's "image" (169), just as Werther finds, "waking or dreaming, [Lotte] fills my entire soul! Here in my head, in my mind's eye, I see her dark eyes the moment I close my own" (*Werther*, 105).

[45]Ibid., 128.

[46]Ibid., 134.

[47] *Paul Claudel & André Gide, Correspondence 1899-1926*, ed. Robert Mallet (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), 90.

[48]Sonnenfeld, "Baudelaire et Gide", 80.

[49] Robert W. Greene, "Fading (Sacred) Texts and Dying (Guiding) Voices in Gide's Early *Récits*", *French Forum* 12 (1) (1987), 88.

between Corneille's mystical martyrs and Racine's classical and biblical *femmes fatales*, between renunciation and destructive passion, between, in the microcosm of Fongueusemare, the Alissa and Lucile of Jérôme's imagination.

Tony Hunt hears the echo of an even subtler allusive play in the name of Abel's drama, "*Le Nouvel Abailard*" (107). Indeed Gide articulates his strong emotional reaction to Rémusat's *Abélard*, a play he read the year before he began *La Porte étroite*,[50] in a linguistic register similar to Jérôme's. Nearly thirty years later, commenting on a book about Abélard, Gide writes, "je reconnaissais avec le sujet même du drame, l'émotion, la passion qu'avait allumée en moi, au sortir de la rhétorique, le drame de Rémusat . . . . [Cette pièce] agit sur moi à peu près comme la prédiction des Sorcières de *Macbeth.* Avec quel tremblement je fis alors la découverte de ma destinée."[51] Hunt grounds his belief that "Rémusat's drama and the letters of Abelard and Heloïse provided the impetus to the creation of *La Porte étroite* and shaped Gide's ethical and metaphysical concerns in this *récit*"[52] on the myth's concern with the same litany of heroic struggle Alissa would have heard in Dante, Goethe, Racine, and Corneille: "Passion and renunciation, sensuality and spirituality, possession and sublimation."[53] Hunt convincingly hangs the thematic parallels on a trellis of elements common to both the myth and Gide's novel.

> First, there is the obvious similarity of names Alissa and Eloissa. Second, these two women shared academic or literary studies with the men with whom they were in love. Third, they are eventually sacrificed to these men. Like Heloïse, Alissa is really passionately involved with the men whom she loves but is denied (in her case from the very beginning) the love which she desires and needs and, rather than interfere with his life, she seeks consolation in religious sublimation. In this escape she discovers pride. Fourth, her story is dominated by the theme of renunciation, a renunciation that has its roots in resignation. Fifth, she reveals her torment in a series of letters. These similarities all

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[50]Tony Hunt, "Aissa-Eloissa", *Orbis Litterarum* 33 (1978), 183.
[51]Hunt, 183, *Journal*, 19 March 1930, 975.
[52]Ibid., 183.
[53]Ibid., 184.

> concern the role of Alissa, since it is obvious that Jérôme is no Abelard.[54]

That Jérôme is no Abélard might well be one of the ironies that Gide hoped to extract from the allusion. The twelfth-century theologian is castrated after he follows Tristan's lead in placing his love for a woman above his love for god; Alissa's similar sacrifice is thwarted--"Si pourtant il savait que parfois il n'aurait qu'un geste à faire, et que ce geste parfois je l'attends" (165)--because, unbeknownst to her, this nineteenth century theologian had been metaphorically castrated by his parents and Lucile.[55] Indeed it is Alissa's insight that the only true virtue is to love as much as possible and ever more, which recalls Abelard's powers of analysis in his condemnation of certain Fathers of the Church: "Ils ont fait de l'amour un crime, ils ont diffamé les dons les plus précieux que le ciel ait faits aux hommes."[56] Though Rémusat, unlike the Fathers of Western literature, clearly applauds Heloïse's bravery in following her natural inclinations, the myth still insists that love be defined by heroic suffering, separation and deferral, and that a Christian civilisation will demand religious withdrawal from the world as a penalty for those "heretical" adepts of the religion of love.

Given the economy of Gide's allusive suggestions, it would seem the title of Abel's play, *Le Nouvel Abailard,* wittily calls to mind as well Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Heloïse,* perhaps even before it summons the original myth of the twelfth-century lovers. Arguably, Gide, through Abel, directs the title of the play toward Jérôme and Alissa, the two lovers Abel finds to be "stupéfiants d'égoïsme" (67). Certainly the author of *L'Immoraliste* playfully intrudes in his *récit* through Lucile's adoptive-brother the author of Privautés,[57] allowing the Gide of his African experiences to look with impish derision at the protagonists' self-perceived heroism in *La Porte étroite.* In Rousseau's epistolary novel we find all the commonalities on Hunt's list--the male intellectual mentor, the sacrifice of the stronger woman to the

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[54]Ibid., 185.

[55]See Kevin Newmark, "Love's Cross in La Porte étroite", *Modern Language Notes* 92.2 (1984), 1109, and Babcock, 37.

[56]Cited by Hunt, 187, from Charles de Rémusat, *Abelard* (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1877), 285.

[57]Apter notes that the title of Abel's novel "bears an unmistakable resemblance to *L'Immoraliste.* The work has been praised and respected by critics for its stylistic.felicities but Alissa confesses to Jérôme that . . . she was unable to peruse it without feeling 'shame', and even its purchase was difficult, for the very title of the book was too 'ridiculous', too compromising *to utter* before the bookseller" (124).

weaker male, the obstacle (marriage in this case) to Julie's (Heloïse's) passionate love, the consolation of platonic sublimation, the revelation of her heroic agony in a series of letters. An even more striking parallel in Rousseau's psychological study is Saint-Preux's jolting discovery of Julie's last letter, which makes clear that renunciation had only refined her passion for him.[58] But Rousseau alters the Heloïse pattern so that platonic renunciation becomes once more a higher call to heroism than is Isolde's and Heloïse's daring union of body and soul, so that death--Romance's price for the feminine admission of desire[59]--becomes again the only honourable consummation for a perfect love.

By providing a representative panorama of western Romance to serve as an informative backdrop for Jérôme's and Alissa's relationship, Gide allows a much greater body of literature to resonate throughout *La Porte étroite*. It would be easy to hear, for example the impossible love of Emma Bovary's beloved *Paul et Virginie*,[60] whose heroine loves her "frère", nourishes that affection in a tropical nature as "Christian" as Fongueusemare, and finally, when the sensual serpent raises its head, chooses to separate herself from Paul and, eventually, die rather than confront her sexual nature. It seems likely, too, that Chateaubriand's Atala,[61] another Beatrice whose triumphant death leads her Dante to a deferred culmination of love in heaven, informs Alissa's initial hope that her Christianity will triumph over the pagan attractions of the southern forest, her final martyrdom in the war between natural inclinations and spiritual demands. Both Loring Knecht[62] and Germaine Brée[63] hear Madame de Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves* resounding throughout *La Porte étroit*e. The importance of this echo is not only that it would add a female-penned platonic Romance to the male-dominated shelf, but also that La Fayette

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[58]An additional parallel is found in Jérôme's last interview with Juliette, from which it appears (to the reader) that her love for him may have survived intact. Gide makes Jérôme the victim of dramatic irony in his own narrative when he apparently fails to understand that Juliette's question addresses more her love for him than it does his love for Alissa: "Alors tu crois qu'on peut garder si longtemps dans son coeur un amour sans espoir?" (182).

[59]Naiomi Schor, *Breaking the Chain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 19-20.

[60]*Madame Bovary*, 34. Part I chapter VI opens: "Elle avait lu *Paul et Virginie* et elle avait rêvé la maisonnette de bambous, le nègre Domingo, le chien Fidèle, mais surtout l'amitié douce de quelque bon petit frère . . . . "

[61]Chateaubriand, *Atala, René* , ed. Phyllis Crump (Manchester: University Press, 1951).

[62]Knecht, 640.

[63] Germaine Brée, *André Gide: L'Insaisissable Protée* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1953), 197.

suggests that a woman may pursue a male-constructed pattern for her own reasons.

La Fayette seems at first merely to catalogue the same elements of platonic love. The Princess serves as the spiritual muse who elevates M. Nemours above the rest of mankind;[64] the separation made necessary by her marital fidelity fans their impossible love to a "violent passion" never found within the confines of legal vows; her renunciation effects the ennobling suffering of romantic martyrdom, which the princess seems to guarantee for herself with a common substitute for romantic death: the evasion of the world in the convent. We need only to substitute Alissa's apparent fidelity to God for the Princess's constancy to her noble but uninspiring husband to see the structural similarities with *La Porte étroite*. But, as Knecht sees, La Fayette's novel suggests that a woman's reason for conforming to the platonic pattern might lie somewhere else than in duty to religion and God. And more importantly, Gide, in his sympathy for Alissa, agrees with the female author of this seminal French romance.

It is only because Madame de La Fayette, like André Gide, cared to study the heroine of Romance as something other than an object projected by a male need that Madame de Clèves finally admits her real reason for accepting a male-invented pattern. She encourages the separation, constructs the obstacles, renounces her natural inclinations, and, when her husband dies, chooses the convent over marriage because she believes that men are inconstant by nature. When M. Nemours, the former master of courtly "*commerce*" for whom she has long experienced "une passion violente", complains that her resistance goes beyond even the most heroic demands of "virtue", she admits:

> Néanmoins je ne saurais vous avouer, sans honte, que la certitude de n'être plus aimée de vous, comme je le suis, me paraît un si horrible malheur que, quand je n'aurais point des raisons de devoir insurmontables, je doute si je pourrais me résoudre à m'exposer à ce malheur . . . .
>
> Croyez que les sentiments que j'ai pour vous seront éternels et qu'ils subsisteront également, quoi que je fasse.[65]

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[64]Madame de La Fayette, *La Princesse de Clèves et autres romans*, preface Bernard Pingaud (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), 305: "Ah! Madame, vous oubliez que vous m'avez distingué du reste des hommes . . ."

[65] *La Princesse de Clèves* , 306, 309

This is precisely Alissa's fear, delivered in remarkably similar language, after she has come upon her cousin and sister in the garden. Jérôme worries for a moment "que peut-être j'avais eu tort, marchant trop près de Juliette, d'abandonner mon bras autour d'elle" (52), but does not understand that Alissa's subsequent letter supplies what must be at least a partial motivation for her intended "sacrifice" for the younger and more extroverted Juliette.

> "J'ai peur d'être trop âgée pour toi. Cela ne te paraît pas encore parce que tu n'as pas encore eu l'occasion de voir d'autres femmes; mais je songe à ce que je souffrirais plus tard, après m'être donnée à toi, si je vois que je ne puis plus te plaire . . . .
> Comprends que je ne parle ici que pour toi-même, car pour moi je crois bien que je ne pourrai jamais cesser de t'aimer. (57)

By their own testimony, then, far from seeking heroic suffering, the princess and Alissa hope to avoid a greater pain in the future when their lovers prove inconstant by submitting today to the lesser suffering of separation. Perhaps Alissa's most significant "sublimation"--more than her fear of Lucile's influence--is her conscious and unconscious attempts to provide a religious motivation to what is in fact fear of Jérôme's "flabby" fidelity.

As both Loring Knecht and Christian Vandendriessche[66] have cogently documented, Gide signals throughout the *récit* that Alissa's fears are well-founded. On at least four occasions, Gide comes between Jérôme with the wedge of dramatic irony, allowing him to trip over his own literary suggestions. Just prior to his indiscretion with Juliette Jérôme had recited to Alissa Baudelaire's "Chant d'automne"; shortly after he has given her cause to doubt him, he orchestrates a reading of Swinburne's "The Triumph of Time". Both poems concentrate on the ephemerality of the mortal condition just when Alissa needs reassurance that Jérôme will never cease to love her. And while he is indignant that Alissa would question his fidelity--"Cesser de nous aimer! Mais pouvait-il être question de cela" (57)--he unwittingly suggests she is right in sending her Racine's scriptural paraphrase, "Malheureux l'homme qui fonde / Sur les hommes son appui!" (93). He

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[66]Christian Vandendriessche, "Structure d'un récit gidien: Le Journal d'Alissa dans *La Porte étroite*, *Revue des sciences humaines* 137 (Jan.-Mar. 1970): 10-17.

aggravates the suggestion, again unwittingly, by initialing for her attention a continuation of the same verse in a copy of Racine he had given to Alissa:

> . . . . L'âme heureusement captive
> Sous ton joug trouve la paix,
> Et s'abreuve d'une eau vive
> Qui ne s'épuise jamais.
> Chacun peut boire en cette onde,
> Elle invite tout le monde;
> Mais nous courons follement
> Chercher des sources bourbeuses
> Ou des citernes trompeuses
> D'où l'eau fuit à tout moment. (98)

As "flasque" in his sensitivity as he in his constancy, Jérôme ignores both that he is once again encouraging Alissa to take the ascetic path and providing her with the motivation: Gide implies that *Jérôme* is the man upon whom Alissa should not found her hopes, *Jérôme* is the capricious and muddy spring of illusory sustenance.

Gide subverts Jérôme's account, too, through Alissa's letters and journals. As argued above in chapter I, the Jérôme who offered up his life to protect Alissa (26), who claimed he would give his life to diminish her agony (85), repeatedly fails Alissa when she most needs him. It is clearly Jérôme who continues to subscribe to the sweet agony of separation espoused by the patterns of puritanism and Romance. After the cancellation of their long-awaited reunion upon his return from Italy, Jérôme assumes that Alissa, too, confuses virtue and happiness, separation and love: "Nous trouvions dans la longueur de cette séparation une épreuve digne de notre vaillance" (104). But Alissa's willingness to submit to the masochistic formula of Romance contradicts the unguarded pleas for Jérôme's presence in her recent letters: "Cette nuit, de toute mon âme je pensais: Merci, mon Dieu, d'avoir fait cette nuit si belle! Et tout à coup je t'ai souhaité là, senti là, près de moi . . ." (100). "J'ai tant à te dire ; j'ai soif d'une si inépuisable causerie . . . . Oh! qu'il soit fini pour jamais, cet affreux hiver de silence! Depuis que te voilà retrouvé, la vie, la pensée, notre âme, tout me paraît beau, adorable, fertile inépuisablement" (102). These seem the entreaties of a lover no longer satisfied by the platonic shadow of correspondence. The explanation for her sudden volte face ("Je ne voudrais pas te peiner, mais j'en suis venue à ne plus souhaiter--maintenant--ta présence"[103]) lies in Jérôme's manipulation of his text. He claims he has copied everything in these letters

that might help us understand his *récit* ("tout ce qui peut instruire ce récit" [100]), yet there is a curious ellipsis prefacing Alissa's resignation to the patterns of romantic martyrdom: "... Non, n'écourte pas ton voyage pour le plaisir de quelques jours de revoir. Sérieusement, il vaut mieux que nous ne nous revoyions pas encore" (103). Jérôme's reader cannot know what he has hidden with the ellipsis or the contents of his letter that prompted Alissa's response, but one possible inference is that Jérôme has insensitively implied that the reunion she has so long desired would be something of an inconvenience for him.

Should the reader not begin to suspect that an understandable insecurity is the real motivation behind Alissa's resignation to the discourse of separation, Gide repeats the pattern of textual manipulation prior to the reunion after Jérôme's release from military service. Once more Alissa makes herself vulnerable in her letters, confessing even that she refuses the wise advice of Racine not to found her hope upon men: "Sans confiance en toi, Jérôme, que deviendrai-je? J'ai besoin de te sentir fort; besoin de m'appuyer sur toi. Ne faiblis pas" (105). "O mon frère, je ne suis vraiment moi, plus que moi qu'avec toi" (108). "La crainte de t'inquiéter ne me laisse pas te dire combien je t'attends . . ." (112). While, in what she hopes will be the last letter before the reunion, Alissa admits, "ta venue tant souhaitée, il me semble, à présent, que je la redoute" (113), Jérôme should interpret Alissa's fear as an understandable "apprehension" rather than as an invitation to cut short their reunion. Again Jérôme has found reason to omit the letter in which he explains how pressing academic affairs (the same bloodless academicism that serves as a foil to Michel's growth) could be more important than Alissa's need for his presence. Jérôme's matter-of-factness in introducing Alissa's "very brief" response suggests he takes Alissa's defensive rationalization at face value.

> Mon ami, je t'approuve entièrement de ne pas chercher à prolonger outre mesure ton séjour au Havre et le temps de notre premier revoir. Qu'aurions-nous à nous dire que nous ne nous soyons déjà écrit? Si donc des inscriptions à prendre te rappellent à Paris dès le 28, n'hésite pas, ne regrette même pas de ne pouvoir nous donner plus de deux jours. *N'aurons-nous pas toute la vie?* (113-14) (Emphasis mine.)

The demands of Jérôme's theological career will necessitate a negative response to both this plea for assurance and Alissa's oft-repeated requests

for Jérôme's support. Jérôme allows Alissa, in fact, but two more short reunions to live up to the impossible image he had created. Failing to hear in her ascetic "dépoétisation" another impassioned plea for help, he decides, as shown above, that he would be foolish to persist in the "fidelity" to which he had sworn so many times.

It seems likely, too, that this same fear of Jérôme's inconstancy is the real motive behind Alissa's opposition to marriage. Born in an age when the court employed matrimony as a political lever, Romance taught its readers that the lovers' 'illegitimate' vows were more sacred than those exchanged in the cathedral. And as Dante, Werther, Abélard, and Julie will attest, this implied distrust of official vows continued even after adultery was eliminated as a necessary ingredient of the religion of love. Jérôme, a veritable pastiche of romantic rhetoric and attitudes, instructs Juliette:

> --Mais pourquoi nous fiancerions-nous? Ne nous suffit-il pas de savoir que nous sommes et que nous resterons l'un à l'autre, sans que le monde en soit informé? S'il me plaît d'engager toute ma vie pour elle, trouverais-tu plus beau que je lie mon amour par des promesses? Pas moi. Des voeux sembleraient une injure à l'amour... Je ne désirerais me fiancer que si je me défiais d'elle. (49)

Gide has Juliette reply for him: "Ce n'est pas d'elle que je me défie..." Alissa's little library might have planted the seed of a nearly instinctive distrust of official promises, but experience rather than Romance supplies Alissa's motivation for refusing Jérôme's "paraphrased" request: "Le mot: fiançailles me paraissait trop nu, trop brutal" (53). When Jérôme bursts into her room to make the proposal, he catches Alissa in a pose that reminds her she is very much the "créole's" daughter: "elle mettait un collier de corail et pour l'attacher . . . se penchait . . . dans un miroir entre deux flambeaux allumés". With the recent images of her mother's infidelity and Jérôme's indiscretion in the garden in her mind, this is hardly the moment Alissa would wish to speak of eternal fidelity. She finds herself trapped in the same vicious circle with the Princess de Clèves: "l'amour naît hors du mariage, parce qu'un engagement éternel est sa perte; mais il ne peut vivre sans de tels engagements que l'inconstance naturelle de l'être humain l'empêche de tenir".[67]

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[67]Bernard Pingaud, preface to *La Princesse de Clèves*, 27.

Surrounded by the open infidelities in the court of Henry II, the Princesse de Clèves can never forget the real reason her mother taught her the need for "une extrême défiance de soi-même": "elle lui contait le peu de sincérité des hommes, leurs tromperies et leur infidélités".[68] Once her husband's death removes any obstacles demanded by courtesy or virtue, the princess fears what seems to be true of Jérôme's "amour de tête": it is the very denial of attainment that has allowed her lover to believe himself constant:

> Je sais que vous êtes libre, que je le suis. . . . Mais les hommes conservent-ils de la passion dans ces engagements éternels? Dois-je espérer un miracle en ma faveur et puis-je me mettre en état de voir certainement finir cette passion dont je ferais toute ma félicité? M. de Clèves était peut-être l'unique homme du monde capable de conserver de l'amour dans le mariage. Ma destinée n'a pas voulu que j'aie pu profiter de ce bonheur; peut-être aussi que sa passion n'avait subsisté que parce qu'il n'en aurait pas trouvé en moi. Mais je n'aurais pas le même moyen de conserver la vôtre: je crois même que les obstacles ont fait votre constance.[69]

But if Gide does recall the arguments of Madame de La Fayette's novel in *La Porte étroite,* he importantly refuses to accept her ending. The external similarities are strikingly similar: after nearly succumbing from the spiritual turmoil precipitated by her renunciation, the Princess "ne voulut pas s'exposer à detruire les [résolutions], ni revenir dans les lieux où était ce qu'elle avait aimé. Elle se retira, sur le prétexte de changer d'air dans une maison religieuse".[70] In the throes of a similar malady, Alissa admits to God that she seeks ascetic refuge from Fongueusemare in a little nursing home because "cette maison, ce jardin encouragent intolérablement mon amour. Je veux fuir en un lieu où je ne verrai plus que Vous" (175). Convinced by her own experiences in court that renunciation of self was far preferable to the inevitable pains of love,[71] Madame de La Fayette awards the Princess de Clèves with a fruitful tranquillity. "Enfin, des années entières s'étant passées, le temps et l'absence ralentirent sa douleur et éteignirent sa passion . . . . Et sa vie, qui fut assez courte, laissa des exemples de vertu

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[68]*La Princesse de Clèves*, 137.
[69]Ibid., 306.
[70]Ibid., 314.
[71] See her essay "Le Triomphe de l'indifference", *La Princesse de Clèves et autres romans.*

inimitables".[72] No less convinced that the need for 'eternal' fidelity and man's inability to provide it have trapped Alissa in a vicious circle, Gide refuses any solution that renounces the mortal and seeks refuge in the immortal. Alissa's momentary "grand calme" is violently routed by the terrible reward of insight:

> l'éclaircissement brusque et désenchanté de ma vie. Il me semblait que je voyais pour la première fois les murs atrocement nus de ma chambre. J'ai pris peur. . . . (177-8)

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3. "A Heap of Broken Images"[73]

The relative purity of Alissa's and Jérôme's various reasons for emulating their literary models places in relief perhaps the most significant irony in Gide's Romance parody: that the spiritual muse comes closer than her knight to realising the quest for the authentic self. Ultimately Jérôme's demands for Alissa to play the Beatrice to his Dante go beyond his sexual lack and a desire to rise above his feckless mediocrity; confusing his desires and emotional responses for those of his literary mediators, Jérôme shields himself from an even more pervasive lack, a curious emotional hollowness hiding behind the impassioned rhetoric of Romance. Alissa imitates her mediators, as we have seen, because her growing fear of her mother's influence redoubles her need to play Jérôme's bodiless Beatrice, and because the romantic gestures of separation and ascetic renunciation allow her to sublimate her fear of Jérôme's inconstancy. Alissa outstrips Jérôme, too, in coming to the awareness that she has confused her desires with those of her literary mediators. As Jérôme's narrative advances, the rising volubility of his rhetoric plays an ironic counterpoint to both his inability to act and the stasis of his understanding. In Alissa's "dépoétisation" of her text (both her journal and her self), on the other hand, the increasing rhetorical economy mirrors her growing ability to act and to get in touch with her authentic self.

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[72] *La Princesse de Clèves*, 315.
[73] T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*.

The Jérôme who finishes his *récit* suffers as severely as the twelve year-old Jérôme from "bovarysm",[74] the mindless imitation of others' desires, gestures, intonation and rhetoric. Since he is frozen in an eternal pre-adolescence, Jérôme's unconscious assumption that his models' desires are his own eliminates any need for him to question the purity of his true motivation. The constant disparity between Jérôme's rhetoric and hollow emotions recalls Rodolphe's cynical assumption in *Madame Bovary* that "les discours exagérés cach[ent] les affections médiocres".[75] And while it is difficult to distinguish between Jérôme's obtuseness and his conscious manipulation of the text, the failure to adhere to his own criteria for arriving at the truth suggests he must, at times, be "hiding" his tepid emotional reality behind a smoke screen of rhetoric. For surely the broken promise to write "très simplement mes souvenirs" (11) contributes significantly to the failure admitted not long before he introduces Alissa's Journal: "Comment, par un simple récit, amènerais-je à comprendre aussitôt ce que je m'expliquai d'abord si mal?" (133). His own twice-implied answer, of course, would be to keep the "simple" *récit* free of impassioned rhetoric that might confuse form and substance, that might mystify more than clarify. Jérôme the failed narrator, then, has come no farther in understanding this than the Jérôme who interprets Alissa's exterior "dépoétisation" as the sign of an interior loss of beauty, who confuses the form, the "intonation pathétique" of Pascal's prose and the sincerity of the idea behind it: "C'est ce tremblement, ce sont ces larmes qui font la beauté de cette voix" (139).

Jérôme, like Barthes's plagiarising suitors in his *Fragments d'un discours amoureaux*, calls upon whichever "fragment" of an inherited "lover's discourse" best serves his present needs.[76] But while Barthes's lovers may, in fact, be using the inherited and hackneyed to articulate real desires, Jérôme uses the fragments to shore up a dream world that allows him to evade any responsibility for Alissa's tragedy. As discussed above, he manipulates "l'absence"[77] to allow him to paint his "abandonment" of Alissa as a proof of his willingness to suffer for love; he suggests his propensity to dissolve in tears ("Éloge des larmes"[78]) is an outward sign of a Pascalian inner beauty

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[74]Girard, 5, is referring to Jules de Gaultier's *Le Bovarysme*, Paris: Mercure de France, 1902.
[75]*Madame Bovary*, 183.
[76]Roland Barthes, *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*, 10.
[77]*Fragments*, 19.
[78]Ibid., 213.

rather than of a failure to mature emotionally; he introduces ascetic renunciation ("Être ascétique"[79]) to their relationship to avoid confronting his own sexual insecurity, then leaves Alissa when her mortification no longer expresses itself in a "poetic" form; he encourages Alissa's self-denial but fails to see that she could respond only in the most extreme "fragments" of the lover's discourse, the "suicide"[80] Werther, Atala and Virginie choose when the only hope of culminating their love is with a "Union au Paradis".[81]

Frequently Gide provides, as discussed above, the source of Jérôme's stolen fragments; at other times he allows them to resonate as the unascribed but unmistakably "already heard"; always he uses the plagiarised fragment to signpost the destructive effects of Jérôme's characteristic separation of form from its emotional content. As Russel King has pointed out, Jérôme again fails to adhere to his own criteria for arriving at the truth. "He condemns a tendency to precocity and a false desire to distort in order to make his text more plausible, a tendency which he considers natural in certain children and particularly in himself as a child".[82]

> En transcrivant nos paroles, je sens bien qu'elles paraîtront peu enfantines à ceux qui ne savent pas combien sont volontiers graves les propos de certains enfants. Qu'y puis-je? Chercherais-je à les excuser? Pas plus que je ne veux les farder pour les faire paraître plus naturelles. (37)

> "Oh!" m'écriai-je, avec cette exaltation un peu pompeuse de mon âge. . . . J'eus la fatuité de prendre pour un effet de mon médiocre lyrisme le trouble de Juliette. (49-50)

Typically, Jérôme's search for the truth fails at the halfway mark on both occasions, excusing himself for the precocity of his rhetoric but failing to recognize its damaging effects. His admittedly somewhat childish and "unnatural" words, insisting that she "show him" the celestial "route", place the unnatural Beatrician burden on Alissa. And it is the "mediocre" paraphrase of Goethe's mirror metaphor, occasioned by Jérôme's insensitive hopes that Alissa would overhear it, that wounds simultaneously both sisters, Juliette whom Jérôme fails to see is in love with him, and Alissa who questions his fidelity for the first time. The older Jérôme's retrospective

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[79]Ibid., 41.
[80]Ibid., 259.
[81]Ibid., 267.
[82] King, 40.

condemnation of the fatuousness and shortsightedness of the younger at some points, then, is limited and, perhaps, in part a strategy of supposed "sincerity" to authenticate his version of the relationship with Alissa. He is very concerned with the effect his *récit* will make on the reader.

But even if his reader excuses both the fatuousness of the prose and the attendant destructiveness as the natural insensitivity of certain "children", how is he to pardon the equally fatuous and destructive language Jérôme employs more than two decades later? That the thirty-five year old narrator remains as much the prey of the same distorting flights of grandiloquence as Jérôme the adolescent testifies to his inability to develop as a responsible adult. Jérôme is the proto-Romantic, childlike Werther stuck in time. Prey to the language, Jérôme remains, like Paul, prey to the "polarizing tendency" common to sentimental Romance and the adolescent mind. Here the female loved one exists at platonic extremities of "purity" and "virtue"; here the male lover is acted upon, grammatically passive, relinquishing will and responsibility to the "transporting" and intoxicating sentiments; here the interchangeable "heart" and "soul", fountainheads of these overpowering emotions, are ironically the only sentient organs. Compare the language in Saint-Preux's lyrical lament in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* with that Jérôme the narrator uses to recount the moment that "decided his life", the night his fear of Lucile precipitates his ephemeral vow.

> . . . je reviens le soir, pénétré d'une secrète tristesse, accablé, d'un degoût mortel, et le coeur vide et gonflé comme un ballon rempli d'air. O amour! ô purs sentiments que je tiens de lui!... Avec quel charme je rentre en moi-même! Avec quel transport j'y retrouve encore mes premières affections et ma première dignité! Combien je m'applaudis d'y revoir briller dans tout son éclat l'image de la vertu, d'y contempler la tienne, ô Julie, assise sur un trône de gloire et dissipant d'un souffle tous ces prestiges! Je sens respirer mon âme oppressée, je crois avoir recouvré mon existence et ma vie, et je reprends avec mon amour tous les sentiments sublimes qui le rendent digne de son objet.[83]
>
> Sans doute je ne comprenais que bien imparfaitement la cause de la détresse d'Alissa, mais je sentais intensément que cette détresse était beaucoup trop forte pour cette petite âme palpitante, pour ce frêle corps tout secoué de sanglots.

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[83]Jean-Jaques Rousseau, *Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* (Paris: Librairie Garnier Frères, 1880), Part II, letter XVII.

> Je restais débout près d'elle, qui restait agénouillé; je ne savais rien exprimer du transport nouveau de mon coeur; mais je pressais sa tête contre mon coeur et sur son front mes lèvres par où mon âme s'écoulait. Ivre d'amour, de pitié, d'un indistinct mélange d'enthousiasme, d'abnégation, de vertu, j'en appelais a Dieu . . . (25-26)

St. Preux's familiar apostrophe to "amour" abstracts the loved one, calling into question whether the speaker loves a flesh and blood woman or whether, as Barthes suggests, he loves love ("Aimer l'amour"[84]). The interchangeability of the lady's name and "amour" implies the lover might well be confusing the desire for an abstraction and a desire for a particular loved one. Indeed, in a tradition that emphasizes the importance of "love" in a man's quest for identity, the desire might well precede the "object" desired. Constant's Adolphe, in search of himself, covets the "transports" of an enamoured friend: "Tourmenté d'une émotion vague, je veux être aimé, me disais-je, et je regardais autour de moi. . . . Offerte à mes regards dans un moment où mon coeur avait besoin d'amour, ma vanité, de succès, Ellénore me parut une conquête digne de moi.[85] Ferrante traces this particular sign of Romance's male narcissism to twelfth-century lyric, in which the lady "seems to be a personification of love".[86] Jérôme does not need to be with Alissa since "love and the lady are virtually interchangeable: they have the same powers and the same effect on the lover; the same images and pronouns are used for both". Thus, during the first separation occasioned by his schooling, he finds, "J'étais alors tout occupé par mon amour" (31); and after Alissa's and Juliette's Christmas "sacrifices", Jérôme finds, " Je ne trouvais d'autre raison à ma vie que mon amour, me raccrochais à lui, n'attendais rien, et ne voulais plus rien attendre qui ne me vînt de mon amie" (Alissa or "amour"?) (88). The lover, Ferrante explains, forms an image of the lady who incarnates love in his mind, "attributes the qualities he values to that image, and worships it or berates it depending on his mood". This allows Jérôme, then, to assign to an exterior force his own "shifting" constancy and need for exaggerated "virtue": "O feinte exquise de l'amour, de l'excès même de l'amour, par quel secret chemin tu nous menas du rire aux pleurs et de la plus naïve joie à l'exigence de la vertu!" (46).

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[84]*Fragments* , 39.

[85]Benjamin Constant, *Adolphe* (Paris: Biblioteque Larousse, 1914), 46, 48.

[86]Ferrante, *Women as Image in Medieval Literature* , 66.

Alissa, like the lady of Romance, only "appears to be a separate being"; appropriated through language, she is the "mirror image" of her lover.

Jérôme sees himself, too, in the grander mirror of nature, delivers his reflected image to his reader in the language of pathetic fallacy. If he grants nature a momentary exterior existence, it is the exaggerated pastoral of a *Paul et Virginie,* never the Dionysiac forest Alissa finds in the South. Jérôme's hymns to nature preface the memory of each encounter with his lover, the fragment Barthes calls "Rencontre:"Qu'il Était Bleu, Le Ciel".[87] The first splendid summer of his love-- "tout semblait pénétré d'azur"--inspires only language, "conversations and readings" (45). Recalling his melancholy prior to the meeting following Alissa's first reproachful letter, Jérôme remembers " l'air était saturé d'automne. Le soleil ne tiédissait qu'a peine les espaliers, mais le ciel était orientalement pur" (61-2). Just before he troubles the Easter reunion by introducing the self-fulfilling prophecy of the "Signe"[88] of the cross ("Convenons d'un signe qui voudra dire: c'est demain qu'il faut quitter Fongueusemare"[126]), Jérôme recalls, "le ciel était comme ma joie, chaud, brillant, délicatement pur" (125). He remembers wanting to fall down on his knees in front of Alissa, but the stolen gesture and effusive language surely dilate Jérôme's true emotions, since he assures Alissa in the next breath he would be able to leave her "sans larmes, sans soupirs . . . sans adieux" (126).[89] Jérôme's language is even more dramatically out of step with the moment at their last encounter. Now that Alissa's beauty is entirely "angélique", Jérôme suddenly discovers the erotic face of nature. Just before Jérôme grabs Alissa wildly, almost "brutally", the narrator recalls.

> Le soleil déclinant, que cachait depuis quelques instants un nuage, reparut au ras de l'horizon, presque en face de nous, envahissant d'un luxe frémissant les champs vides et comblant d'une profusion subite l'étroit vallon qui s'ouvrait à nos pieds; puis, disparut. . . . Je sentais m'envelopper encore, et pénétrer cette sorte d'extase dorée où mon ressentiment s'évaporait et je n'entendais plus en moi que l'amour. (149-50)

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[87]*Fragments* , 233.
[88]Ibid., 253.
[89]As Knecht, comments, "By his brutal choice of language he has (one wonders how consciously) warned Alissa that the 'fatal evening' *will* come, that it is entirely within his power to leave her, and what is even more astounding, to leave her without a tear, a sigh, or a good-bye. And not only does he say he can do this, he actually does" (645).

Too emotionally weak to uncover the truth about himself, Jérôme furiously buries every possible intimation in inherited language. Alissa, on the other hand, increasingly strips away the accumulated cultural layers shrouding her text. Jérôme, in effect, reverses the trajectory of Michel's quest by submerging the authentic self in sterile academicism (he tellingly "plunges"[90] into his studies), while Alissa peels away, like Michel, the same overlays of language from "books, teachers, and parents", to discover the authentic "text", "l'être authentique". Michel explains:

> Et je me comparais aux palimpsestes; je goûtais la joie du savant, qui, sous les écritures plus récentes, découvre, sur un même papier, un texte très ancien infiniment plus précieux. Quel était-il, ce texte occulté? Pour le lire, ne fallait-il pas tout d'abord effacer les textes récents? (*L'Immoraliste*, 61)

Jérôme, then, stumbles on the corresponding literary metaphor for Alissa's rigourous quest: "dépoétisation". Just as she strips away all the trappings of "amour" to see if it has an existence independent of its ambience, she strips away any language of her mediators to find "sincerity", the language of her own desires. "She is all too familiar", Greene says, "with the discrepancies that separate appearance from reality, the desire for purity from the double-dealing rhetoric we can deploy in formulating that desire. In reflex action she recoils in horror from 'le trop écrire'",[91] the language Jérôme uses to avoid self-scrutiny.

To take too literally these metaphors which liken "self" to "text" would be to ignore another important similarity in Michel's and Alissa's text. The hero of *L'Immoraliste* learns that one best frees oneself from inherited desires by putting away the written word altogether. Michel reads his true desires in the face of experience before he attempts to capture them in language. In this way he ensures that idea never precedes experience, that the word, as the young André Gide writes in his own journal, never precedes the idea.[92] Ironically, Alissa begins her journal on her "first

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[90]Twice he "plunges" into his work to separate himself mentally from Alissa". Le lendemain nous nous plongeâmes dans le travail" (69). "Je pus me plonger dans le travail" (123).

[91]Greene, 86.

[92]*Journal*, 31 December 1891, 28: ". . . que jamais le mot ne précède l'idée. Ou bien: que le mot soit toujours nécessité par elle".

journey" to keep her company", but it is precisely because she escapes from the sterility of Jérôme's language that she begins to hear her authentic self in the "language" of the south:

> Je commence un journal--sans grand amusement, un peu pour me tenir compagnie; car, pour la première fois de ma vie peut-être, je me sens seule--sur une terre différente, étrangère presque, et avec qui je n'ai pas encore lié connaissance. Ce qu'elle a à me dire est sans doute pareil `a ce que me racontait la Normandie, et que j'écoute infatigablement à Fongueusemare--car Dieu n'est différent de soi nulle part--mais elle parle, cette terre méridionale, une langue, que je n'ai pas encore apprise et que j'écoute avec étonnement. (159)

Nature does speak the same language at Fongueusemare, but Alissa could not hear it above the din of others' attempts to interpret it for her. Alone in the South, she hears, as Michel does in Biskra,[93] its original primitive strains.

The sensual language she learns at Aigues-Vives, far from "foreign", is the beating of her own heart, a sound suppressed until now by the spiritual patterns projected upon her by Jérôme and his "little library".

> Je m'étonne, m'effarouche presque de ce qu'ici mon sentiment de la nature, si profondément chrétien à Fongueusemare, malgré moi devienne un peu mythologique. Pourtant elle était encore religieuse la sorte de crainte qui de plus en plus m'oppressait. . . . Tout à coup un chant d'oiseau, unique, s'est élevé, si près de moi, si pathétique, si pur qu'il me sembla soudain que toute la nature l'attendait. Mon coeur battait très fort. . . . (160)

How different a traveler Alissa is from Jérôme. Finding in "strange" lands the projected image of his own expectations, he is like the "sedentary" seamen Marlow describes in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* : "Their minds are of the stay-at-home order, and their home is always with them. . . . In the immutability of their surroundings the foreign shores, the foreign faces, the changing immensity of life, glide past, veiled not by a sense of mystery, but by a slightly disdainful ignorance".[94] Recognizing that the primitive

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[93]Gérard Defaux, in an article that traces the influence of Virgil on *La Porte étroite*, sees a similar comparison: "Sur des vers de Virgile: Alissa et le mythe gidien du bonheur", *André Gide 3 , La Revue des lettres modernes* 331-35 (1972): 97-121.

[94]*Heart of Darkness*, 5

southern forest is also "religious", Alissa is like Marlow, who owns the "suggestive and wild" tremor of primitive drums might have "as profound a meaning as the sound of bells in a Christian country".[95] Jérôme sees himself in nature, Alissa sees in nature her self; consequently, she glimpses more truth in her single journey to Gide's beloved south of France than Jérôme does in all his months in Italy, the same country whose "luxurious" nature had inspired Michel to shout aloud, "Un nouvel être! Un nouvel être!"[96]

"La crainte de ne pas être sincère"[97] governs the remainder of the Aigues-Vives entries. In her scrupulous litany Alissa returns repeatedly to the purity of her motives for her romantic sacrifice, the threat of narcissism, the validity of the received discourse's definitions of love and happiness. As Jérôme continues to write himself away from the truth, Alissa uses her journal to track it down.

> Pourquoi me mentirais-je à moi-même? C'est par un raisonnement que je me réjouis du bonheur de Juliette. Ce bonheur que j'ai tant souhaité, jusqu'à offrir de lui sacrifier mon bonheur, je souffre de le voir obtenu sans peine, et différent de ce qu'elle et moi nous imaginions qu'il dût être. Que cela est compliqué! Si ...je discerne bien qu'un affreux retour d'égoïsme s'offense de ce qu'elle ait trouvé son bonheur ailleurs que dans mon sacrifice .... (161)
>
> Combien cette analyse de ma tristesse est dangereuse! Déjà je m'attache à ce cahier. La coquetterie, que je croyais vaincue reprendrait-elle ici ses droits? Non; que ce journal ne soit pas le complaisant miroir devant lequel mon âme s'apprête. (161)
>
> . . . Je voudrais me garder de cet insupportable défaut commun à tant de femmes: le trop écrire. Considérer ce cahier comme un instrument de perfectionnement. (162)

It seems likely that Gide directs Alissa's charge toward Jérôme, whose style is characterised by both "le trop écrire" and the precious "bien écrire", stylistic excesses in which truth is frequently sacrificed to form. "Freeing herself from Jérôme's language," Newmark notes, "is not only a way of sacrificing her love for him, it is also a means of preserving *herself* in her

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[95]*Heart of Darkness*, 20
[96]*L'Immoraliste*, 62.
[97]*Journal*, 31 December 1891, 28.

language, making her journal the exclusive mirror of her thoughts alone".[98] Fearful that she has fallen into the trap of the "beau langage", Alissa attempts to strip the truth of a literary self-consciousness she attributes to Jérôme.

> En en relisant quelque pages, j'y avais surpris un absurde, un coupable souci de bien écrire...que je *lui* dois . . . . J'ai déchiré toutes les pages qui m'ont paru *bien écrites*. (Je sais ce que j'entends par là.) J'aurais dû déchirer toutes celles où il est question de lui. J'aurais dû tout déchirer... Je n'ai pas pu. (167)

To cleanse her ideas of Jérôme's language, Alissa must free herself from the "colonizing" volumes in her little library. Her earlier admission to Jérôme that she would give all Hugo, Shelley and Byron for Keats's four odes and some of Baudelaire's sonnets suggests Alissa had begun to rebel against Jérôme's grandiloquence even before her journey south: "Je vais peut-être t'indigner. . . . Le mot: *grand* poète, ne veut rien dire; c'est être un *pur* poète qui importe..." (103) Alissa heard in the South how nature's "pure language" sets understated utterance against a backdrop of silence--"Il faisait un silence étrange . . . lorsque tout à coup un chant d'oiseau, unique, s'est élevé . . . si pur" (160). Now she hopes to divest herself of all inherited discourse and myth by abandoning the masters of "grandiloquence" for literary models who communicate with the "simplicity" Jérôme had promised his reader: "Ce sont là d'humbles âmes qui causent avec moi simplement, s'exprimant de leur mieux, et dans la société desquelles je me plais. Je sais d'avance que nous ne céderons, ni elles à aucun piège du beau langage, ni moi, en les lisant, à aucune profane admiration" (138). In removing Jérôme's language from her shelf, Alissa reclaims the bedroom into which Jérôme had so thoughtlessly intruded, the traditional "space of female desire and feminine interiority",[99] "a room of one's own"[100] that a woman needs to find her own voice.

And while she eventually falls into another linguistic trap, exchanging the male-penned romantic discourse for the male-penned ascetic discourse, Alissa does manage to demystify most of the fragments with which Jérôme

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[98]Newmark, 1008.
[99]Reid, 164.
[100]Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Hogarth Press, 1929), 6: "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction."

has attempted to piece himself and their relationship together. As King points out, "her rejection of the 'beau langage' of literature parallels her rejection of the bankruptcy of the false discourse of the person she *thought* she had loved".[101] Her insights recall those of the disillusioned Emma.

> Avant qu'elle se mariât, [Emma] avait cru avoir de l'amour; mais le bonheur qui aurait dû résulter de cet amour n'étant pas venu, il fallait qu'elle se fût trompée, songeait-elle. Et Emma cherchait à savoir ce que l'on entendait au juste dans la vie par les mots de *felicité*, de *passion*, et d'*ivresse*, qui lui avaient paru si beaux dans les livres.[102]

> Parfois j'hésite si ce que j'éprouve pour [Jérôme] c'est bien ce que l'on appelle l'amour--tant la peinture que d'ordinaire on fait de l'amour diffère de celle que je pourrais en faire. (163)

Alissa strips the literary paint off the "virtue" of renunciation--"Parfois je doute s'il est d'autre vertu que d'aimer" (165); she understands that she has donned the Beatrice pattern just to please Jérôme--"Il me semble à présent que je n'ai jamais 'tendu à la perfection' que pour lui" (165). In a letter written about this time, Alissa tells Jérôme that their lover's correspondence was every bit as illusory and narcissistic as the discourse in literature--"je sentais trop que notre correspondance tout entière n'était qu'un grand mirage, que chacun de nous n'écrivait hélas! qu'à soi-même" (120). Finally, she decides that a move to epistolary silence is the only way to dispel the mirage of Romance's rhetoric:

> Renonçons pour un temps à correspondre et viens passer à Fongueusemare les quinze derniers jours de septembre près de moi. Acceptes-tu? Si oui, je n'ai pas besoin de réponse. Je prendrai ton silence pour un assentiment et souhaite donc que tu ne me répondes pas. (132-3)

Alissa denies Jérôme the chance to love her in language in order to test whether he can love her in person. Recognising that the lover's discourse, for all its talk of "heart and "soul", is written into the exterior of things, Alissa strips Fongueusemare and her person as rigourously as she strips her journal of all that might falsely fuel the impression of love. She removes the piano from the salon, the books and paintings from her room, leaving naked

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[101]King, 42.
[102]*Madame Bovary*, 33.

the 'shrine' Jérôme had interpreted as the "paix mélodieuse où je reconnaissais Alissa . . . . Tout racontait à mon coeur sa pureté et sa pensive grâce" (137). Finally, she strips all poetry from her person, for the first time does not meet Jérôme in the garden, and refuses to have Jérôme read to her. "She has stripped herself of art", Babcock suggests, "to show Jérôme that it is a woman he must love, not the perfection of love. Alissa knows that in her insignificant works of piety she will find no 'piège du beau langage', for it is the trap of language that has denied Jérôme to her".[103] Jérôme's response demonstrates his ignorance of the trap's very existence. He continues, as his metaphor implies, to confuse form and substance, the exterior sign with an interior reality. He asks the Beatrice he had claimed to love for her "interior grace" (22),

> pourquoi t'arraches-tu les ailes? (140)

Albert Sonnenfeld has argued that Alissa's admission, "que je ne l'avais jamais écrit que pour [Jérôme]" (177), suggests that she structures the journal to cover rather than to unearth the truth: "This creation is . . . structured by a need to form a particular self (or mask) for another self (the recipient-reader-listener)" Jérôme, to whom she had bequeathed the journal in her will.[104] Arguably, the strength necessary for such an admission suggests instead that the journal is one of the final proofs of her *attempt* to always write "sincerely", of her awareness of the many obstacles that troubled her task. To reduce the journal to "a peculiar form of posthumous revenge designed to keep a particular image of the diarist alive in Jérôme-the-reader's sensibility" ignores Alissa's implied reasons for, on one level, writing it "for" Jérôme:

> Mes inquiétudes, mes doutes me paraissent si dérisoires aujourd'hui que je ne puis plus y attacher d'importance ni croire que Jérôme puisse en être troublé. Mon Dieu, laissez qu'il y surprenne parfois l'accent malhabile d'un coeur désireux jusqu'à la folie de le pousser jusqu'à ce sommet de vertu que je désespérais d'atteindre. (177)

What she hopes will surprise Jérôme is the the sincerity of the unskilled accents (as opposed to the skilful "bien écrite") of a heart that desires, not to take revenge, but to push him toward the truthfulness he has avoided, a

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[103]Babcock, 41.
[104]Sonnenfeld, "On Readers and Reading", 174.

sincerity Alissa has learned in the silence of loneliness. To interpret the journal as a mask would negate the importance of those insights through which Gide seems to be speaking, would undervalue its structural importance as a foil to Jérôme's literary insincerity.

Sonnenfeld goes on to say, "that the Journal succeeds in imposing its image of Alissa can be seen in the narrative itself, since one must assume that Jérôme recreated Alissa in his souvenirs AFTER her death and AFTER reading her Journal"[105] Might one assume as easily that Jérôme's *failure* to assimilate the insights of Alissa's Journal into his *récit* is perhaps the most striking testimony of his perceptual myopia and denial?[106] It is the very space between Jérôme's and the readers' interpretations of the journal in which Gide most effectively operates to subvert Jérôme's narrative designs. Parallel to Jérôme's inability (and refusal?) to recognise the spiritual muse he had helped to create once she strips herself of the lover's discourse is his failure to understand Alissa's writing once she has peeled away the layers of Romance's grandiloquence and tautology. Stumbling again over his own metaphors, Jérôme interprets Alissa's "dépoétisation" as nothing more than "le retour au naturel" (145). As Babcock has observed, Jérôme has, once more, unwittingly hit upon the truth: Alissa has unearthed the "natural, for it is life", not the platonic travesty he had hoped to create.[107]

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[105]Sonnenfeld, "On Readers and Reading", 176

[106]Marty finds, "Il y a une ascèse étrange de la part de Jérôme à ne point faire profiter sa reérospection des 'informations' que nous recueillons de la lecture du Journal d'Alissa: la mémoire reste ininformée de ce que la conscience du sujet se remémore *sait* néanmoins, comme si, dans un prodigieux effort de dédoublement de cette conscience, Jérôme maintenait à l'écart de celle-ci ce qui n'a pas dû manquer de la modifier pourtant" ("A propo de *LPE*", 96).

[107]Babcock, 41.

III. The Martyr: A Sensual Mysticism

Overview

L'amour de la créature est trompeur et passe bientôt; l'amour de Jésus est stable et fidèle.

Celui qui s'attache à la créature tombera comme elle et avec elle; celui qui s'attache à Jésus sera pour jamais affermi.[1]

--Thomas à Kempis

While the female ascetic's mimesis of Christ's suffering seems to strike the same passive posture as that of the waiting Maiden, there remains an important potential difference: rather than settle for the secondary position as the Knight's spiritual inspiration, the ascetic sets out on her own quest for mystical Oneness with the Absolute. And, as more than one feminist writer has remarked, in a male-dominated world, ascetic-mysticism has long offered the woman perhaps the only culturally acceptable manner to, at once, free herself from dependency on males and become a "hero" in her own right. That independence is limited, of course, when the aspiring female saint follows, as does Alissa, the instructions of male mentors faithful to a patristic Church.

Neither Alissa nor Miriam embarks on the ascetic path because of any innate mistrust of mortal saviours; they seek refuge in Christ alone only when Jérôme and Paul prove repeatedly to be unreliable. That neither overcomes her hope to have a normal human relationship is seen in the constant confusion between their desire to be heavenly and earthly brides, their confusion between spiritual and sensual passion. Both achieve the revelations they seek, though their mysticism, to borrow Sarah Beckwith's phrase, remains decidedly "material".[2] While their revelations manifest the four "marks" William James finds

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[1]Thomas à Kempis, *L'Imitation de Jésus-Christ*, trans. F. de Lamennais (Paris: Nelson, 1956), II, 7, 108.

[2] See Sarah Beckwith, "A Very Material Mysticism: The Medieval Mysticism of Margery Kempe", Medieval Literature (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986).

common to all "mystical achievement", they belie James's observation that sensuality impedes mystical achievement.[3]

By having Miriam and Alissa achieve sensually what they have sought spiritually, Lawrence and Gide once again deny the validity of a religious tradition that would pit body against soul, heaven against earth. To interpret their heroines' failures as the authors' lack of sympathy, however, would be to ignore the point that Miriam's and Alissa's insights, while unexpected in their sensual power, are tied to their spiritual sensitivity and also remain superior to either Paul's or Jérôme's attempts at mystical communication. Miriam aspires to a mystical communion with both Paul and the Absolute, while Paul's mystical Oneness would leave Miriam "out of the count"; Alissa comes to admit that the sensual "South" speaks in its own mystical language, while Jérôme proves to be as "flabby" in mystical sensitivity as he is in character.

The insensitivity of both male lovers, in fact, is more responsible than cultural mythology for their partners' posture of suffering. While it is true that Romance and Christianity have prepared Alissa and Miriam for martyrdom, both women would prefer a very human happiness to a lonely self-immolation. Born amidst the "battle" between Gertrude and Morel, Paul's need to suffer at least equals that of Miriam; his need to sacrifice her is as least as strong as her need to be sacrificed. Too weak to confront his own confused sexuality, Jérôme encourages Alissa to fear her own sensual desires; his inability to enter into a normal love relationship and his inconstancy drive her to a "jealous" but "faithful" heavenly bridegroom.

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[3]William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: The Modern Library, 1929), 397-8.

Chapter Five: St. Miriam

> *I can't stand Francis of Assisi--nor St. Clare--nor St Catherine. I didn't even like Assisi. They've killed so much of the precious interchange of life: most folks are half dead, maimed, because of those blighters. The indecency of sprinkling good food with ashes and dirtying sensitive mouths!*
>
> **--Lawrence to Dorothy Brett, 1926**[1]

> *Your ideas of the grand perverts is excellent. You might begin with a Roman--and go on to St. Francis--Michael Angelo and Leonardo--Goethe or Kant--Jean Jacques Rousseau or Louis Quatorze. Byron--Baudelaire--Wilde--Proust: they all did the same thing, or tried to: to kick off, or to intellectualise and so utterly falsify the phallic consciousness, which is the basic consciousness, and the thing we mean, in the best sense, by common sense.*
>
> **--Lawrence to Aldous Huxley, 1928**[2]

1. St. Catherine and her Wheel

Sixteen years after completing *Sons and Lovers,* Lawrence confidently denies the validity of the religious experience he had begun to question through the character of Miriam, the mystical martyr in the tradition of Francis, Clare, and St. Catherine. Tellingly "nailed" on Miriam's "bare" bedroom wall, hangs

> a reproduction of Veronese's "St Catherine". She loved the woman who sat in the window dreaming. Her own windows were too small to sit in. But the front one was dripped over with honey suckle and virginia creeper, and looked upon the tree-tops of the oak-wood across the yard. . . . (207)

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[1]*Letters,* V, 441.
[2]*Letters,* VI, 342.

"Dripping" over the "too-small" windows of Miriam's religious perception are, the narrator implies, the signs of a honeyed code of the virgin martyr. St. Catherine, whose icons were favourites "under the influence of the crusades",[3] awaits a lover who will embody both knight and Christ, a bridegroom for whom the ultimate demonstration of holy love is the mimesis of his own Passion. Sitting, "dreaming", waiting, Catherine strikes the passive pose common to both maiden and martyr. Common, too, are the implied renunciation of earthly love and the ascetic's belief that all love requires suffering.

As John Worthen has pointed out, the Nietzsche Lawrence was reading as he began the novel would, in the tradition of mystical paradox, offer a way to transcend the opposition of body and soul. "Behind thy thoughts and feelings, my brother, there is a mighty lord, an unknown sage--it is called Self; it dwelleth in thy body, it is thy body. There is more rationality in thy body than in thy best wisdom. . . . Of all that is written, I love only what a person hath written with his blood. Write with blood, and thou wilt find that blood is spirit".[4] In a letter dated 8 December 1915, Lawrence delineates for Bertrand Russell a mystical philosophy that he had "believed" long before he experiments with it through Paul:

> I have been reading Frazer's *Golden Bough* and *Totemism and Exogamy*. Now I am convinced of what I believed when I was about twenty--that there is another seat of consciousness than the brain and the nerve system: there is a blood-consciousness which exists in us independently of the ordinary mental consciousness, which depends on the eye as its source and connector. There is the blood-consciousness, with the sexual connection holding the same relation as the eye, in seeing, holds to the mental consciousness. One lives, knows, and has one's being in the blood, without any reference to nerves and brain.[5]

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[3]David Hugh Farmer, ed. , *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 69.

[4]Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, tr. Thomas Common (New York: Random House, 1906), 33, 39. Cited by John Worthen, *D.H. Lawrence: The Early years 1885-1912* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 211.

[5]*Letters*, II, 470.

What Lawrence has abstracted into a "conviction" by 1915 has yet to be achieved by any of the characters in his fiction in 1912. In pitting Miriam's variety of religious experience against Paul's, Lawrence is able to work through dramatically his criticisms of both religious experiences; and while Lawrence suggests Paul is headed down the more salutary mystical path, he remains more sympathetic to Miriam than one might expect from the above letters to Dorothy Brett and Aldous Huxley. Just as Lawrence hoped his novel would capture the "tragedy of thousands of young men in England",[6] he describes as well the tragedy of thousands of young girls in England, France, and all the other places where Christianity and Romance formed this particular cultural alliance. Miriam, far from being an aberration, is typical of many young sensitive women who aspire to a Christian code of sainthood. James calls upon W.R. Inge's *Christian Mysticism* for a definition of "saintliness" that informs both Miriam's readiness to sacrifice for Paul and her hesitation to concede that sexual communion is the "highwater mark of living": "Men of preeminent saintliness agree very closely in what they tell us. They tell us that they have arrived at an unshakeable conviction, not based upon inference but on immediate experience, that God is a spirit with whom the human spirit can hold intercourse. . . . They tell us what separates us from him and from happiness is, first, self-seeking in all its forms; and second, sensuality in all its forms".[7]

In her biography of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, Monica Furlong speculates on why this "intelligent, passionate and sensual" contemporary of Alissa and Miriam was "drawn to a religion that treated [women] so woundingly". "Forbidden all leadership, not permitted to raise their voices in public, to perform rites. . . women still clung to the religion which spoke of love, sharing and compassion, faithfulness in prayer, religious devotions and acts of charity". Sainthood, then, a state attained by "one who gives himself, herself, to God heroically",[8] presented itself as one of the few culturally approved paths to heroism along which men and women competed on equal footing.

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[6]*Letters*, I, 77.

[7]James 266n2, cites his source as Dr.W.R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism*(London, 1899), 326.

[8]Monica Furlong, Thérèse *of Lisieux* (London: Virago Press, 1987), 2, 4, 9. Furlong takes her definition for sainthood from the *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*.

In a *Companion in the Churches and Picture Galleries of Europe,* published the same year as *Sons and Lovers,* St. Catherine is portrayed as just such a hero.

> An Egyptian princess [who] in her early years devoted herself entirely to study, became famed far and wide for her learning. . . . Her counsellors prayed her to marry but she could not be satisfied with anything less than absolute perfection. . . . There were hermits in the desert, near Alexandria, and one of them, at the bidding of the Blessed Virgin Mary, came to Catherine, and told her that the husband she desired was the King of Glory himself. . .
> One night she had a dream that she was presented to the King of Glory, but that he turned from her as not fair enough for him. [After] she was baptized. . . she had another dream, that she was again presented to the King of Glory, and that he accepted. On waking she found the ring on her finger, and from that time she utterly despised all things of this world, and thought only of her meeting with her Heavenly Bridegroom
>
> Soon after this, a great persecution arising in Alexandria, Catherine stood forth, and argued with the philosophers of the kingdom, and such was the power of her wisdom that they were first silenced and then converted. This so incensed the Emperor Maximin that he ordered them all burnt. . . . And Catherine, having indignantly refused Maximin's offer of marriage, was, by his orders, bound between four wheels, which turning in different directions, would rend her to pieces. But in a moment, fire fell from heaven, and consumed the wheel. . . . Then, after being cruelly scourged, St. Catherine was beheaded, and angels carried her body to its grave on Mount Sinai.[9]

The learned Princess who, like Christ, astonished the doctors in the kingdom,[10] serves well as a model for a girl who, since "she could not be a princess by wealth or standing . . . was mad to have learning whereon to pride herself" (174); the dreaming bride of Christ for the girl who was, according to Paul-the-narrator, always "dreaming her religion. And he was nearly a religion to her" (323); the disdainful emasculator of the emperor for one denied access to the men's world of doing because

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[9]E. A. Greene, *Saints and Their Symbols: A Companion to the Churches and Picture Galleries of Europe,* rev. ed (London: Whittaker, 1913), 54-55.

[10]Luke 2:46-48.

she was a woman; and the determined martyr for the girl who "saw tragedy, sorrow, and sacrifice ahead" (255).

Jessie Chambers recalls that Lawrence came upon the materialist philosophy of Huxley and Darwin, and the pragmatism of William James "at a time of spiritual fog, when the lights of orthodox religion and morality were proving wholly inadequate. . . . My feeling was that he tried to fill up a spiritual vacuum by swallowing materialism at a gulp".[11] "In all his reading he seemed to be groping for something that he could lay hold of as a guiding principle in his own life . . . . He seemed to consider all his philosophical reading from the angle of his own personal need".[12] Arguably, he was groping for a principle that, unlike those of "orthodox religion", would marry body and soul, open the highest revelations of the Absolute to sensual passion as well as spiritual passion. James's *Pragmatism* "especially appealed to Lawrence, who," remembers Chambers, "liked also *Some Varieties of Religious Experience*";[13] and whether Lawrence learned the "marks" of mystical experience from James, or merely recognised his own experience in James's analysis, the criteria serve as a useful checklist to evaluate the mystical experiences of both Paul and Miriam. Lawrence, in fact, seems to set "orthodox religion" against his own "blood consciousness" by incarnating in Miriam and Paul two irreconcilable varieties of mysticism: both aspire to become "one with the Absolute"--"the great mystic achievement"[14]--but the "logic" of Miriam's code demands that spiritual consciousness be achieved by suppression of the body, while Paul comes to believe this higher "Oneness" comes from *celebration* of the body.

Admitting that his "own constitution shuts [him] out" from mystical states of consciousness,[15] James proposes four marks that, being present, might objectively identify the mystical achievement, becoming one with the Absolute. The first two characters "will entitle any state to be called mystical"; the latter two "are less sharply marked, but are usually found".

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[11]*E. T.*, 112.
[12]Ibid., 112-13.
[13]Ibid., 113.
[14]James, 410. See note 3 above.
[15]James, 370.

> I. *Ineffability*.--The handiest of the marks by which I classify a state of mind as mystical is negative; the subject of it immediately says that it defies expression, that no adequate report of its content may be given in words. It follows from this that its quality must be directly experienced; it cannot be imparted or transferred to others....
>
> 2. *Noetic quality*.--Although so similar to states of feeling, mystical states seem to those who experience them to be also states of knowledge. They are states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain. . . .
>
> 3. *Transiency*.--mystical states cannot be sustained for long. Except in rare instances, half an hour, or at most an hour or two, seems to be the limit beyond which they fade into the light of the common day. Often, when faded, their quality can be but imperfectly reproduced in memory; but when they recur it is recognized; and from one recurrence to another it is susceptible of continuous development in what is felt as inner richness and importance.
>
> 4. *Passivity*.--Although the oncoming of mystical states may be facilitated by preliminary voluntary operations, as by fixing the attention, or going through certain bodily performances. . . . yet when the characteristic sort of consciousness once has set in, the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power. . . . Some memory of [mystical states] always remains, and a profound sense of their importance. They modify the inner life of the subject between the times of their recurrence.[16]

The absent-presence of "ineffability" makes it the most difficult mark to verify. If the true mystical experience lies somewhere above language, yet, as St. Teresa says, "must be proclaimed",[17] the mystic perforce settles for metaphor or the inherited rhetoric applied to both physical and spiritual experience. In her study of St. Teresa of Avila's rhetoric, Alison Weber notes "Teresa repeatedly affirms that the mystical presence resists definition, even through analogy".[18] To paraphrase Gide, the danger

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[16]Ibid., 371-2.

[17]St. Teresa de Avila, *The Interior Castle, The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus*, trans. E. Allison Peers(London: Sheed & Ward, 1946), VI:22.

[18]Alison Weber, *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Femininity*(Princeton: UP, 1990), 105. Denis de Rougemont, *Love in the Western World* (Princeton: University Press, 1983), makes a similar point in his chapter on Teresa's language, 160.

here is not so much that the word might precede the idea, but that it might precede the experience. Where enthusiasm will not be satisfied with the sincerity of silence, the mystic needs a new language[19] to approximate the ineffable and incommunicable, a lexicon rich in the nuances and gradations to accommodate the subtle changes as the mystical experiences develop in richness. Lawrence surrounds Miriam with the traditional litany, saving the new language of science for Paul's mystical experiences.

In what seems to be an introductory self-portrait, the Miriam-narrator describes herself as one "inclined to be mystical" (173), then proceeds to emphasise her predisposition to such states. She describes her soul as being "so strong for rhapsody", which Paul corroborates in describing the "rhapsodic way"(176) in which she performed the most mundane tasks. They both attribute to her the exterior signs traditionally associated with the mystic's interior experience: she is forever "trembling" and "quivering", then "swooning" as she approaches "ecstasy", the most commonly-used metaphor to describe the mystic's experience. When Miriam's mysticism either frightens Paul or induces in his "hurt" but "highly-developed" soul a similar experience, Lawrence seems to take seriously Miriam's religious intensity: "this fearful naked contact of her soul . . . shocked" Paul; when her "eyes blazed naked in a kind of ecstasy, that frightened him" (184); "Miriam's soul came into a glow . . . . All his latent mysticism quivered into life" (203). But when the source of her mystical experience is less than divine, Lawrence appears to have Paul use the mystical litany as the "terms of mere reproach", as James explains, with which we frequently meet "any opinion which we regard as vague and vast and sentimental".[20] When, for example, Miriam carries "a big stew-jar" in a "rhapsodic" way, Lawrence seems to be making fun of a Mystic who, as his pun suggests, sees "the whole of life in a mist" (173).

Lawrence is less ambivalent about Miriam's "noetic" apprehension. Her intuitive consciousness so overpowers her rational consciousness that Miriam "was cut off from ordinary life". "She seemed to need things kindling in her imagination or in her soul, before she felt she had them"

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[19]See de Rougemont,161.
[20]James, 370.

(179). This "Negative Capability" gratifies Paul when Miriam "brings forth to him his imaginations", even though she does not "*understand*" the mystical quality of his art "any more than a woman understands when she conceives a child in her womb" (241); the same quality angers him, however, when Miriam attempts to apply it to the logical constructs of mathematics: "Her soul seemed to be intensely supplicating the algebra book" (188). "'What do you tremble your soul before it for?' he cried. 'You don't learn algebra with your blessed soul. Can't you look at it with your simple clear wits?'" (189). In his adolescent need to polarise, he quickly assigns her to an epistemological extremity: Miriam was like a "gothic arch", which "leapt up at heaven and touched the ecstasy and lost itself in the divine" (215).

To clarify the "less sharply marked" qualities of "transiency" and "passivity" demands the wholeness of a specific mystical experience. On the Good-Friday walk Paul organises, Miriam experiences a "revelation". While Miriam usually attempts to facilitate the oncoming of a mystical state, as does St. Teresa, through prayer,[21] here nature[22] stimulates the onset of the mystical mood, which grasps Miriam "suddenly"[23] in her "passivity". Paul and Nature supplant Christ and God as the "one great figure" with which Miriam communes.

> . . . her lover was nature. She saw the sun declining wanly. in the dusky, cold hedgerows were some red leaves. She lingered to gather them, tenderly, passionately. the love in her finger-tips caressed the leaves, the passion in her heart came to a glow upon the leaves.
>
> Suddenly she realised she was alone in a strange road, and she hurried forward. Turning a corner in the lane, she came upon Paul who stood bent over something, his mind fixed on it, working away steadily, patiently, a little hopelessly. She hesitated in her approach, to watch.
>
> He remained concentrated in the middle of the road. Beyond, one rift of rich gold in that colourless grey evening seemed to make him stand out in dark relief. She saw him slender and firm, as if the setting sun had given him to her. A deep pain took hold of her, and she knew

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[21]"She remained kneeling for some time, quite still, and deeply moved. . . . Prayer was almost essential to her. Then she fell into that rapture. . . ." (208).

[22]James notes that "Certain aspects of nature seem to have a peculiar power of awakening such mystical moods" (385).

[23]James, 374, talks about the characteristic "sudden" onset of most mystical experience.

> she must love him. And she had discovered him, discovered in him a rare potentiality, discovered his loneliness. Quivering as at some 'Annunciation,' she went slowly forward.(201)

Miriam remains respectfully silent. Consistent with the tenor of Good Friday, Miriam compares the mystical power that seizes her to a bodily pain, not that of the masochist, but a Keatsean "pleasant-pain", St. Teresa's joyful "celestial" pain that "penetrates to the marrow of the bones".[24] The "Annunciation" is that of the same "sun" god that Gertrude had recognised in Paul, when she "thrust the infant forward to the crimson, throbbing sun" in an "impulse to give him back whence he came" (51). Announced here, however, is the birth of a new Christ as a lover, not as a son. And though the transient moment fades with the last rift of rich gold, Miriam "always regarded that sudden coming upon him in the lane as a revelation" (202). For all Paul's talk of Miriam's religiosity, from this moment on he has become her Christ, her religion: "Lord", Miriam prays, "make me love him splendidly, because he is Thy son" (208).[25] Like Catherine, Miriam begins now to "dream her religion", though Lawrence suggests that Miriam's mystical union with Paul, *her* Heavenly Bridegroom, begins to take on a decidedly Freudian quality: "At this time she dreamed dreams of him, vivid, unforgettable. These dreams came again later on, developed to a more subtle stage" (202).

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[24] James, 403, cites *The Interior Castle*, VI:11.

[25] Paul finally surmises that Miriam "want[s] a Christ in him"(508); she characteristically "bow[s] in consent" even when Paul mocks the "Gothic" enthusiasm in her that so readily "los[es] itself in the divine"(219). The night on which Paul first tortures her about Clara's superior sensuality, Miriam has prepared the parlour for some sort of profane High Mass:

> There were three of Paul's small sketches on the wall, and his photo was on the mantelpiece. On the table and on the high old rose-wood piano were bowls of coloured leaves. He sat in the armchair, she crouched on the hearthrug near his feet. The glow was warm on her handsome, pensive face as she kneeled there like a devotee"(230) .

She continues to give "him all her love and her faith", "feeling exalted, glad in her faith"(305), even after he has renewed his pledge of eternal love to Gertrude. Miriam "remain[s] [his] sad pensive . . . worshipper"(307) as he ends the "first phase" of their love affair. For this Christ "she could bear anything...she would suffer for him"(344).

While Miriam's mysticism initially frightens and eventually frustrates Paul, it flatters in him the aspiring mystical artist. When he struggles to avow the ineffable truth of art in the "new language" of Impressionist painters and scientists,[26] his mystical disciple "understands". Unable to articulate why she "likes so" his painting, Miriam looks to Paul:

> "It's because there is scarcely any shadow in it--it's more shimmery--as if I'd painted the shimmering protoplasm in the leaves and everywhere, and not the stiffness of the shape. That seems dead to me. Only this shimmeriness is the real living. the shape is a dead crust. The shimmer is inside, really".
>
> And she, with her little finger in her mouth, would ponder these sayings. They gave her a feeling of life again, and vivified things which had meant nothing to her. She managed to find some meaning in his struggling, abstract speeches. And they were the medium through which came distinctly at her beloved objects. (183)

Lawrence's biblical allusion suggests that Miriam's "pondering" is not the rational weighing of a new idea, but the intuitive leap by which Mary understands the divine life she has helped bring into the world. Notably the heart rather than the head is the organ of the Virgin's ineffable insight: when the shepherds spoke of Christ's divinity, "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19).

The transforming mystical experience for Miriam here tends, as it always does for her, toward communion with the source of life, getting "at" Paul, her beloved object. The setting sun simultaneously "reveals" and "gives" Paul to Miriam; when "her soul comes into a glow" in the Easter-decorated church, "they were together" (203); when Paul makes her wild rose bush "immortal", her soul quivered--it was the "communion she wanted" (195-6). This is the mysticism of the Virgin martyr, the "Bride of Christ" for whom the sacraments of intimacy, marriage and communion, serve as a metaphorical touchstone, who

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[26]See Carl and Helen Baron's Worthen's notes on Paul's "scientific" mystical language in the Cambridge edition of *Sons and Lovers*, 535-36. See also the moment of "Oneness" in *Women in Love*: "It was a dark flood of electric passion [Ursula] released from [Birkin], drew into herself. She had established a rich new circuit, a new current of passional electric energy, between the two of them, released from the darkest poles of the body and established in perfect circuit" (353).

desires to simultaneously consume and be consumed. This is the "orison of union" St. Teresa affirms in her autobiography: "the soul is fully awake as regards God . . . . God establishes himself in the interior of this soul in such a way, that when she returns to herself, it is wholly impossible for her to doubt that she has been in God, and God in her".[27] And this, more than the battle between body and soul, is what most distinguishes Miriam's mysticism from Paul's.

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2. The "Brutal" Mystic

Miriam is willing to believe Paul's claim that "possession" could be elevated to a mystical experience: "All strong emotions concentrated there. Perhaps it was so. There was something divine in it" (328); she refuses to recognise as mystical, however, an ecstasy in which she serves merely as a catalyst for Paul's union with the Absolute. She would forfeit the Christian tradition of renunciation only if physical union with her new Christ allowed her to "be in God and God in her". The real mystical schism lies between Miriam's "communion" and Paul's "impersonality", St. Teresa's union with a bridegroom God as opposed to Schopenhauer's union between representatives of the Universal.[28] Once again nature serves as the initial mystical stimulus, once again Lawrence identifies the four marks of James's mystical set:

> It was dark among the firs, and the sharp spines pricked her face. She was afraid. Paul was silent and strange.
>
> "I like the darkness", he said. I wish it were thicker--good thick darkness".
>
> He seemed to be almost unaware of her, as a person; she was only to him then, a woman. She was afraid.
>
> He stood against a pine-tree trunk and took her in his arms. She relinquished herself to him--but it was a

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[27]James, 400, cites *The Interior Castle*, VI:35.

[28]See Rose Marie Burwell, "Schopenhauer, Hardy and Lawrence: Toward a New Understanding of *Sons and Lovers*", *Western Humanities Review* 28 (Spring 1974):107-17, for the history of Lawrence's interest in the German philosopher.

> sacrifice, in which she felt something of horror. This thick-voiced, oblivious man was a stranger to her . . . .
>
> Now he realised that she had not been with him all the time, that her soul had stood apart in horror. He was physically relieved, but no more. Very dreary at heart, very sad, and very tender, his fingers wandered over her face pitifully. Now again she loved him deeply. He was tender and beautiful . . . .
>
> He felt as if nothing mattered, as if his living were smeared away into the beyond, near and quite loveable. This strange, gentle reaching-out to death was new to him. . . .
>
> To him now life seemed a shadow, day a white shadow, night, and death, and stillness, and inaction, this seemed like *being*. To be alive, to be urgent, and insistent, that was *not-to-be*. The highest of all was, to melt out into the darkness and sway there, identified with the great Being . . . .
>
> She had been afraid before of the brute in him: now of the mystic. . . .
>
> He seemed to be unaware of her, though he held her hand close. "To be rid of our individuality, which is our will, which is our effort--to live effortless, a kind of conscious sleep--that is very beautiful, I think--that is our after life--our immortality". (330-32)

Paul attempts to approximate the *ineffable* union with the "great Being" through metaphors of evaporation, the paradoxical "melting out" and "smearing away", in which the apparent solidity of the individual will, which seems to disappear, is transformed into a vapoury union with its source. For Schopenhauer this melting out is the realisation that there is only the will of the "Infinite One", of which we are all part: "'That art thou.' Whoever is able to say this to himself, is on the direct road to salvation".[29] The *noetic quality*, then, manifests itself in Paul's significant revelation of swaying with this "great Being", and in his negative-affirmations that "death, and stillness, and action" seemed like "*being*", while "to be alive", "urgent and insistent" was "*not to be*". Thus *Passivity* provides at least a partial explanation for these mystical paradoxes, since the "urgent" and "insistent" will of the individual opposes the need to submit to the will of a superior power so to, again paradoxically, become nothing in order to realise the authentic self as one with the great Being. The "less the will is excited", says Schopenhauer,

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[29]Arthur Schopenhauer, *The Works of Arthur Schopenhauer*, 3 vols., ed. Will Durant (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1920), I , 483.

"the less we suffer".[30] Since Paul's mystical impulse, as Thomas Greene notes, "leads him to conceive of entrance into the sexual mystery as a technique--perhaps the technique--of attaining the absolute",[31] the *transiency* of the revelation depends on Paul's ability to maintain a state of physical ecstasy.

Mark Spilka sees that Miriam, who "has tried to keep their love intensely personal, has been unable to join him spiritually in 'dark, impersonal' desire". But does it necessarily follow that she sets in motion Paul's "gentle reaching out to death"? "There has been no exchange, no communion", Spilka continues, "and though she responds now to his 'tenderness', he accepts her 'love' as death".[32] Schopenhauer, who claimed that a world characterised by "will" must be filled with suffering, believed "the man who is gifted with genius suffers most of all".[33] Death would constitute the only lasting victory for one as sensitive as Paul. Structurally, Paul's fascination with a Keatsean "easeful death" and waking sleep[34] both presages his drifting toward death after Gertrude's death and echoes his mother's fear that Paul "had that poignant carelessness about himself, his own suffering, his own life, which is a form of slow suicide" (300). This "gentle reaching out to death" sounds like the active corollary to his later feeling that he was being "drawn toward death"(451) once he loses his mother.

Gertrude, too, blames Miriam for Paul's will to die, though Lawrence reminds his reader throughout that her accusations are born, at least partially, of guilt. She believes Miriam "killed the joy and warmth in Paul" (342) when, in fact, Paul's signature "knitted eyebrows" suggest much of the suffering is the bitter fruit of his mother's "battles" with Morel.

> She had dreaded this baby like a catastrophe, because of her feeling for her husband. And now she felt strangely toward the infant. Her heart was heavy because of the child, almost as if it were unhealthy, or malformed. Yet it

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[30]"Counsels and Maxims", 19.

[31] Thomas Greene, "Lawrence and the Quixotic Hero" *Sewanee Review* 59 (1951), claims this "mystical impulse in Lawrence underlies his 'religion'" (569).

[32]Mark Spilka, "Lawrence's Quarrel with Tenderness", *Critical Quarterly* 9 (1967), 365.

[33]*Works* I, 400.

[34]Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale".

> seemed quite well. But she noticed the peculiar knitting of the baby's brows . . . as if it were trying to understand something that was pain" (50)

Gertrude feels as if a "burden were on her heart", but her apostrophe implies the burden of a suffering Christ is Paul's. "'My lamb!' she cried softly", feeling "in some far inner place of her soul that she and her husband were guilty". She had already feared the "peculiar pucker" on Paul's forehead, "as if something had startled its tiny consciousness before birth" (45). Now his "clear, knowing eyes gave her pain and fear. Did it know all about her? Was there a reproach in his look? She felt the marrow melt in her bones, with fear, and pain" (51). When Paul suffered his "fits of depression", "they caused a shadow in Mrs Morel's heart" (64,65).

Lawrence suggests that Paul's mystical instinct to "melt out into the darkness" as a way to escape suffering manifested itself even in the womb. What had seared Paul's consciousness before birth was the "red hot" "brand" of hatred that came "down on [Gertrude's] soul" when Morel thrust her out of the house. Under the Dionysian moon, Mrs Morel "lost herself awhile". Save her "consciousness in the child, her self melted out like a scent into the shiny, pale air. After a time, the child too melted with her in the mixing-pot of moonlight, and she rested with the hills and lilies and houses, all swum together in a kind of swoon" (34). "The Birth of Paul, and Another Battle", the chapter title restored in the Cambridge edition, underlines the brutal Dionysian flavour of Paul's mysticism, one in which "suffering" characterises Paul as much as it does Miriam, one whereby Miriam's "resignation" and "sacrifice" tell perhaps more about the accuracy of her insights into Paul's character than they do about a misguided religious sense. Conceived in the "fearful" "battle between husband and wife" (22), born amidst "another battle", Paul can conceive of man-woman relationships only in metaphors of war and triumph: "Lad-and-girl Love" quickly yields to "Strife in Love", ends inexorably in the "Defeat of Miriam". Despite his denial of his father's godhood (88), the Christ consecrated in his mother's blood when Morel flings the drawer at her ("some drops of blood soaked into its white shawl" [53]), instinctively demands "a sacrifice of Arabella". As argued above, then, Paul's need to sacrifice Miriam would be at least as strong as Miriam's need to be sacrificed. What Christopher Pollnitz proposes about

Lawrence's sexuality certainly applies to Paul and his attitude toward Miriam:

> Lawrence's delineation of the life-force as a dark god whose sexuality is that of the rapist associated with violence or the threat of violence owes as much to the peculiarities of his early home life as to his later study of Nietzsche. The delineation is, in varying degrees, sexist. In the Dionysian flux of self-creation and destruction the women's role is to suffer psychological and, at times, physical trauma, and the man's role is to suffer too, chiefly from having to inflict this trauma.[35]

Miriam is not alone in her fear of Paul's "brutal", "impersonal", and sometimes death-oriented mysticism. Spilka finds that, "in his affair with Clara Dawes, [Paul] seems to find release in 'dark,' impersonal passion";[36] though it should be noted, too, that Lawrence uses the bolder Clara to speak aloud, and thereby validate, the same criticisms the "humbler" Miriam keeps to herself. Paul's most "mystical" moment with Clara echoes loudly an example of a nature-induced state cited in James.[37]

> All the while, the peewits were screaming in the field. When he came to, he wondered what was near his eyes, curving and strong with life in the dark, and what voice it was speaking. Then he realised it was the grass, and the peewit was calling. The warmth was Clara's breathing heaving. He lifted his head and looked into her eyes. They were dark and shining and strange, life wild at the source staring into his life, stranger to him, yet meeting him. And he put his face down on her throat, afraid. What was she. A strong, strange, wild life, that breathed with his in the darkness through this hour. It was all so much bigger than themselves, that he was hushed. They had met, and included in their meeting the thrust of the manifold grass stems, the cry of the peewit, the wheel of the stars . . . .

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[35]Christopher Pollnitz, "'Raptus Virginis': The Dark God in the Poetry of D. H. Lawrence ", *D.H. Lawrence: Centenary Essays*, ed. Maria Kalnins (Bristol: Bristol Classical press, 1986), 132.

[36]Spilka, "Tenderness ", 365.

[37]James, 385n. "Something in myself made me feel myself a part of something bigger than I, that was controlling. I felt myself one with the grass, the trees, birds, insects everything in Nature, I exulted in the mere fact of existence, of being a part of it all--the drizzling rain, the shadow of the clouds, the tree-trunks and so on".

> It was for each of them an initiation and a satisfaction. To know their own nothingness, to know the tremendous living flood which carried them always, gave them rest within themselves. If so great a magnificent power could overwhelm them, identify them altogether with itself, so that they knew they were only grains in the tremendous heave that lifted every grass-blade its little height, and every tree, and living thing, then why fret about themselves: they could let themselves be carried by life. And they felt a sort of peace each in the other: there was a verification which they had together. Nothing could nullify it, nothing could take it away. It was almost their belief in life. (398)

"But Clara was not satisfied", the next paragraph begins. The satisfaction was Paul's alone, the initiation effected but not necessarily experienced by Clara. Even Paul "felt more and more that his experience had been impersonal, and not Clara" (399). When he later tries to insist that "all our intimacy culminates" in the "sex part", Clara counters, "not for me". "I feel . . . as if I hadn't got you--as if all of you weren't there--and as if it weren't *me* you were taking . . . . Is it *me* you want, or is it *it*?" (407). "Clara is not content", argues Gavriel Ben-Ephraim, "with apprehensions of the 'tremendous heave that lifted every grass blade'; she wants what Miriam wanted, the human connection".[38]

Clara's dissatisfaction with Paul's mysticism recalls Miriam's, too, in her fear of the Dionysian "rapist". Miriam "felt something of a horror" when she "relinquishes herself" to the "thick-voiced, oblivious" Paul, a "stranger" who stood "against a pine-tree-trunk" (330). "Something strong and blind and ruthless in its primitiveness, made the hour almost terrible to [Clara]" (397). "She submitted" to Paul, "because his need was bigger than her or him. . . . for she loved him", just as Miriam "only realised that she was doing something for him. . . . She lay to be sacrificed for him, because she loved him so much" (334). Clara speaks later to Paul's brutishness when she wishes he "knew the cruelty of men, in their brute force" (406). And when Paul goes to Clara during Gertrude's last days, "she was afraid", just as Miriam had been, "of the man who was not there with her". "She began to have a kind of *horror* of him. It was almost as if he were a criminal. He wanted her--he had her--and it made

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[38]Gavriel Ben-Ephraim, "Paul's Passion", *D. H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea, 1988), 134.

her feel as if Death itself had her in its grip. She lay in *horror*" (430-31; emphases mine).

Clara knows these flights of passion "held him to her", so she "submitted, and was silent" (408). Paul continues to insist that he and Clara are "caught up in an immense tongue of flame", but Clara knows "so often, he seemed merely to be running on alone" (408). Paul admits to himself that he might leave Clara, as he did Miriam, "out of the count, and take simply woman", but dismisses Clara's complaint as "splitting a hair" (407). Perhaps Lawrence's most ironic implication that his hero has confused mysticism and brutality comes when Paul attains a more satisfying intimacy with Baxter Dawes than he does with either Miriam or Clara. Lawrence's language underlines to what extent Paul has confused the violence imbibed in those parental battles and sexual ecstasy with a loved one. The "mystical" Oneness with a man so much like his father comes but two pages after his last "ecstasy of living" with Clara. In both bouts of "love-making" rational consciousness gives way to blood consciousness ("instinct"), the body becomes the agent of will and a source of joy, "stillness" signals the union with the cosmos. With Clara

> he became, not a man with a mind, but a great instinct. His hands were like creatures, living; his limbs his body were all life and consciousness, subject to no will of his, but living in themselves. . . . And the same joy of strength which held the bracken-frond stiff near his eyes held his own body firm. . . . Everything rushed along in living beside him, everything was still, perfect in itself along with him. (408)

With Baxter,

> pure instinct brought [Paul's] hands to the man's neck, and before Dawes, in frenzy and agony, could wrench him free, he had got his fists twisted in the scarf and his knuckles dug into the throat of the other man. He was a pure instinct, without reason or feeling. His body, hard and wonderful itself, cleaved against the struggling body of the other man. . . . He was quite unconscious, only his body had taken upon itself to kill this other man. . . . He lay, pressed hard against his adversary, his body adjusting itself to its one purpose . . . [Afterwards] He lay still, with

> tiny bits of snow tickling his face, It was pleasant to lie quite, quite still. (410-11)

Paul carries away from the battle "a feeling of connection" between himself and Dawes (423), a "bond" formed by their meeting in the "naked extremity of hate". "At any rate the elemental man in each had met" (424). Lawrence never has Dawes say whether he, too, had experienced this mystical kinship with Paul any more than Clara had.

Lawrence's lovers will not achieve a balanced mystical Oneness until, in *Women in Love,* Ursula frees herself from the restraints of the same icons that trouble Miriam, and Birkin frees himself from Paul's "sort of pleasure in self destruction" (*WL,* 348). Gone is Paul's brutality, achieved is Miriam's intimacy, with Ursula *becoming* for Birkin the mystic "otherness" rather than simply a stimulus to achieve it. Instead of submitting to the "masculine", the "feminine" gives and receives, accepts and yields in a rhythmic equality. Neither "runs on alone", neither leaves the other "out of the count". The encounter begins when "silence" signals the couple's harmony with nature, when thought yields to "instinct". Ursula and Birkin

> sat in stillness and mindless silence. There were faint sounds from the wood, but no disturbance, no possible disturbance, the world was under a strange ban, a new mystery had supervened. They threw off their clothes, and he gathered her to him, and found her, found the pure lambent reality of her for ever invisible flesh. Quenched, inhuman, his fingers upon her unrevealed nudity were the fingers of silence upon silence, the body of mysterious night upon the body of mysterious night, the night masculine and feminine, never to be seen with the eye, or known with the mind, only known as a palpable revelation of living otherness.
>
> She had her desire of him, she touched, she received the maximum of unspeakable communication in touch, dark, subtle, positively silent, a magnificent gift and give again, a perfect acceptance and yielding, a mystery, the reality of that which can never be known, vital, sensual, reality that can never be transmuted into mind content, but remains outside, living body of darkness and silence and subtlety, the mystic body of reality. She had her desire fulfilled. He had his desire fulfilled. For she was to him what he was to her, the immemorial magnificence of mystic, palpable, real otherness (*WL,* 360-61).

The narrator struggles to articulate the ineffable knowledge that surpasses understanding, but Birkin and Ursula respectfully "hid[e] away the remembrance and the knowledge" of their revelation, as if afraid that language might corrupt it. "The new being they achieve", explains Garrett Stewart, "is carefully articulated as the liberation into balanced mutuality",[39] suggesting that real communion with the All is achieved only when both partners are brought to new life. Leaving Miriam and Clara out of it, Paul achieves merely a sort of "mystical" onanism. Gerald takes on Paul's primitive urgency, unleashing Hermione's passion of destruction; Birkin becomes the mystic who transcends ego by tempering Paul's blood knowledge with Miriam's need for communion, St. Teresa's being lost in God and having God lost in her.

> In the new, superfine bliss, a peace superseding knowledge, there was no I and you, there was only the third, unrealized wonder, the wonder of existing not as oneself, but in a consummation of my being and of her being in a new one, a new paradisal unit regained from the duality. How can I say 'I love you' when I have ceased to be; and you have ceased to be: we are both caught up and transcended into a new oneness where everything is silent, because there is nothing to answer, all is perfect and at one. Speech travels between the separate parts. But in the perfect One there is perfect silence of bliss. (*WL*, 417.)

Paul's insistence that Miriam tends toward a dangerous asceticism seems motivated by his need to assuage his own guilt when he decides to sever their relationship. The objective narrator will soon explain that "sex had become so complicated in [Paul] that he would have denied that he ever could want Clara or Miriam or any woman whom he *knew*"(319); and Paul himself will admit to being "bound in by [his] own virginity" (323); but plagued increasingly by his guilt towards Gertrude and fears of his own sexual insecurity--Paul ends the "first phase" of his love affair with Miriam by suggesting that the overstrong "virginity" is hers alone. Her reaction to Paul's Hamlet-like suggestion that she get herself to a nunnery denies loudly that she prefers ascetic renunciation to a normal human love affair. Paul writes,

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[39]Garrett Stewart, "Lawrence, 'Being,' and the Allotropic Style", *Towards a Poetic of Fiction*, ed. Spilka(Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana UP, 1977), 350.

> You see, I can give you a spirit love, I have given it to you this long, long time; but not embodied passion. See, you are a nun. I have given you what I would give a holy nun--as a mystic monk to a mystic nun: surely you esteem it best. (292)

Surely not. "You are a nun--you are a nun"--the words went into her heart again and again. Nothing he had ever said, had gone into her so deeply, fixedly, like a mortal wound" (293). This, Lawrence's metaphor suggests, is the reality behind Alissa's ascetic suffering: Paul affixes with his cruelty the nails Miriam would rather avoid. As Martz suggests, "after such a wound, his later effort to carry on a sexual relationship with her is bound to be failure. She tries, as she has always tried, but her inner life is ebbing. This is not the marriage she yearns for, not the union that he needs. Paul hardly knows she is there, as a person; indeed he does not want to know her as a human being".[40]

Clara is right: Miriam wants a full human relationship with Paul, not merely "a soul union" (321). Everything in her reading had prepared Miriam for Paul's convenient dismissal of her as a mystic nun. Ivanhoe keeps Rowena from the convent by routing the Normans, whose invasion of the "honour of [the Saxons'] wives and of their daughters" led many "maidens of noble families to assume the veil".[41] The narrator of *The Bride of Lammermoor* finds Lucy "fit for the sheep-fold or the cloister";[42] Miriam's "Lady of the Lake", Ellen, would "rather become a nun than "wed the man she cannot love",[43] and the heroine of *Rob Roy* solemnly contracts herself to become "the bride of Heaven" rather than marry Rashleigh, even though the liberated Di sees the convent as a trap of "her oppressed and antiquated religion".[44] Forced by her father to marry the man she cannot love, Lucy might have fared better in a nunnery; but Rowena's, Ellen's, and Di's happy-ever-after marriages clearly emerge as the proper reward for their trials. Northrop Frye identifies the pattern for this curious intersection of Romance and Christianity in Scott's novels:

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[40]Martz, 363.
[41]*Ivanhoe* I, Waverley, XVI, 336.
[42]*The Bride of Lammermoor*, Waverley, XIV, 47.
[43]Sir Walter Scott, "Lady of the Lake ", *Selected Poems*, 260.
[44]*Rob Roy*, Waverley, VII, 142, 244.

> The Virgin who marries at the end of the story . . . represents the structural principle of the cycle (the natural one) and of accommodation to it. The virgin who is sacrificed, or escapes sacrifice and remains a virgin, similarly symbolizes the other principle, the separation or polarizing of the action into two worlds, one desirable and the other one detestable. . . . [In] Scott's society . . . as a rule, a successful female career consists of a good marriage, and retirement to a convent is a sign of maladjustment.[45]

Far from seeking further suffering, Miriam looks to Paul to relieve the vicious ascetic cycle inculcated by her mother's "doctrine of 'the other cheek'" (207). In this Christ-like passivity, her mother taught her, was strength in the face of men's "brutality". In the face of Edgar's taunts over "a few burnt potatoes", Miriam "allowed her anger and her shame, bowing her dark head" (177). When she later "weakens" and answers them, Mrs. Leivers is "disappointed". "Aren't you strong enough to bear it, Miriam, if even for my sake. Are you so weak that you must wrangle with them" (178). In a world where "brutish" males have thwarted the ambitions of a Miriam by delineating self-serving sexual identities, the mimesis of Christ's Passion offers a culturally acceptable discourse that allows the persecuted to feel superior to her persecutors. But Miriam sees in Paul, "who could be gentle" (174), a potential redeemer who would free her from her own scourging at the pillar, her need to make a virtue of suffering, certainly not someone who would join with the brothers who "spat on her and hated her"(178). Unlike Alissa, Miriam is not concerned that she might offend a "jealous God", willingly allowing Paul to become "nearly a religion to her" (323), finding in him the human incarnation of "Christ and God [who] made one great figure" -- "tremblingly and passionately when a tremendous sunset burned out the western sky" (173).

Paul's final self-serving sophism that Miriam's "comfort and her life seemed in the after world"(457) ignores that he has been the one to deny her a life in the present. Lawrence is brutally honest in exposing Paul's self-indulgent insensitivity to Miriam, "on her knees on the rug before the fire, very near to him" (461).

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[45]*The Secular Scripture*, 84.

> "Will you have me, to marry me?" he said very low.
>
> Oh, why did he not take her! Her very soul belonged to him. Why would he not take what was his! She had borne so long the cruelty of belonging to him and not being claimed by him. . . . She pleaded to him with all her love, not to make it *her* choice. . . .
>
> "Do you want it ?" she asked very gravely.
>
> "Not much", he replied with pain.
>
> She turned her face aside. Then, raising herself with dignity, she took her head to her bosom, and rocked him softly. She was not to have him then! So, she could comfort him. . . . For her, the anguished sweetness of self-sacrifice! . . .
>
> "And without marriage we can do nothing?" he asked
>
> His mouth was lifted from his teeth with pain. She put her little finger between her lips.
>
> "No", she said, low and like the toll of a bell. "No, I think not". It was the end between them. She could not take him and relieve him of the responsibility of himself. She could only sacrifice herself to him, sacrifice herself every day, gladly. (462)

"This summary", Patricia Spacks explains, "presents Paul's point of view--shocking in its self-justification and its contempt for the other".[46] Lawrence's drama clearly shows his sympathy for Miriam's "dignity", his disdain for Paul's callousness. Miriam does not sacrifice herself gladly; she turns the cheek yet again because Paul allows her no other choice. Ironically, Paul stands self-accused of the same passivity with which he has charged Miriam. "His desire to lose responsibility for himself", posits Spacks, "dramatizes his extreme passivity and his capacity to elevate passivity into virtue; 'sacrifice,' in contrast, he perceives as weakness". Miriam has no choice but, as she always has with Paul, to "turn the other cheek". And if Miriam prefers the mystical "rapture of self-sacrifice, identifying herself with a God who was sacrificed", if it remains her "*deepest bliss*" (209), it is because Paul, in his brutal and impersonal love making failed to awaken her to the "ecstasy of living" he experiences through Clara, which "seemed the *highest point of bliss*" (408; emphases mine).

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[46]Spacks, 249.

Chapter Six: St. Alissa

Amour humain, amour divin se confondent, non parce que celui-ci serait une sublimation de celui-là, mais parce que le premier est aussi un mouvement vers un transcendent, vers l'absolu.

--"La Mystique", Simone de Beauvoir[1]

Certes, il est bien des pages, dans le Journal d'Alissa, où Dieu et Jérôme sont des images pour le moins confuses, mais Alissa ne serait pas la première sainte qui, ayant préféré l'absolu au général, aurait identifié dans les flèches d'Eros les foudres de Jéhovah.

--"Le nouvel Abailard", Eric Marty[2]

1. Pascal's Pupil

Alissa's spiritual advisers, Blaise Pascal and Thomas à Kempis, would undoubtedly concur with Germaine Brée that, "Gide n'a pas, avec *La Porte étroite,* écrit un roman mystique; il n'a même pas écrit un roman religieux".[3] Neither of these ascetics would recognise as valid any mystical experience that centred on an "Absolute" other than the Christian God. None of Alissa's three mystical moments brings her the Christian communion she so desires, though she arrives through all three at some ineffable intimation of "Absolutes" that trouble rather than ease her religious quest. Try as she might to deny the revelations, as James observes and Gide corroborates, "they carry with them a curious sense of authority for aftertime".[4] The first mystical state forces her to broaden her definition of the "religious" to encompass a pantheism not unlike that experienced by Paul Morel; in the second, as de Beauvoir and Marty suggest above, Alissa, like Miriam, confuses the image of a

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[1]*Le Deuxième sexe, II,* 508.
[2]Marty, "A propos de *LPé*", 105.
[3]Brée, 203.
[4]James, 367.

"radiant" human lover with that of a heavenly bridegroom; in her final mystical illumination she sees only despair where Pascal had promised her "joy". *La Porte étroite is* a "mystical novel", but one in which Gide suggests that self-abandon rather than asceticism, love of life rather than love of death, lead to the only mystical "joy" he would recognise as religious. Alissa's "profane" mysticism, then, impels her toward an increasingly tragic asceticism.

Before examining how Alissa's mysticism and Jérôme's failure drive her to take refuge in the ascetic discourse, it will be necessary to outline the specific arguments from her religious readings that inform her eventual self-immolation. Gide read intensively the writings of Blaise Pascal to better sympathise with the frame of mind in which Alissa wrote her journal;[5] arguably the Jansensist becomes the most important spiritual adviser to thwart Alissa's final victory over the language of Jérôme and her literary "colonisers". In "sweetly"[6] promising her a superior mystical happiness if she will renounce all earthly desires, Pascal encourages Alissa to appropriate an ascetic discourse which, in Newmark's words, "finally makes it impossible for her to successfully avoid the spiritual 'haggling' (*marchandage*) that adds the finishing touches to her despair".[7]

In her article "Le Pari de Pascal perdu par Alissa",[8] Evelyne Méron explains how, once again, Alissa's iconic pattern has been codified by a

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[5]He wrote to Claudel in July 1908, "Depuis quelque mois je vis dans la société presque constante de Pascal [connaissez-vous les lettres à Mademoiselle de Roannez?], mais je voudrais le connaître PAR VOUS" (*Correspondance Claudel/Gide,* 87). Gide speaks of Pascal, always with admiration for both his wisdom and "style", in three Journal entries prior to the completion of *La Porte étroite.* In "Méditation I" of the 1896 "Feuillets", he recalls Pascal's "admirable" passage concerning Alexander's chastity (*J,* 97); on 2 September 1905, Gide notes he has derived much good from reading Pascal's *Pensées* and *Opuscules* (*J,* 176); and in the 27 June 1908 entry, Gide both praises the letters to Mlle de Roannez-- from which Alissa quotes at the end of the first volume of her Journal (170)--and defends Pascal against Suarès's claim that the Jansenist believed the "flesh" to be inimical to the Christian (*J,* 269).

[6] Blaise Pascal, *Pensées, Oeuvres de Blaise Pascal,* 14 vols., ed. Léon Brunschvicg (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1904), "Eloquence qui persuade par douceur, non par empire, en tyran, non en roi" (fragment 15).

[7]Newmark, 1108. "Her continued efforts to read and write lucidly about herself and her love for Jérôme right up to the end maintain an unbroken *exchange* between the religious and epistemological categories of her experience--each spiritual sacrifice being subsequently traded in against an intellectual compensation of it".

[8]Evelyne Méron, "Le Pari de Pascal perdu par Alissa, " *André Gide 5,* ed. Claude Martin, *La Revue des Lettres Modernes* 439-444 (1975): 117-32.

"dichotomising" male point of view. Marrying mathematics and theology in perhaps the most famous argument in his *Pensées*, Pascal presents his reader with an all-or-nothing ascetic wager ("pari") on the existence and importance of God: "Si vous gagnez, vous gagnez tout; si vous perdez, vous ne perdez rien. . . . Je vous dis que vous y gagnerez en cette vie".[9] In wagering her life on the supposition that the spiritual life is the "all" and the earthly life the "nothing", Alissa both loses the gains Pascal promised in this life and, as Méron cogently argues, exposes for Gide the dangerous flaw in the Jansenist's mathematical asceticism.

> Il semble en effet qu'Alissa vive comme si elle avait voulu "prendre le parti" préconisé par Pascal, et en avait, par son échec, montré le défaut. Autrement dit, il semble que *La Porte étroite* soit comme une réfutation romancée du raisonnement mathématique des *Pensées*, seule réfutation possible d'ailleurs, car sur le plan abstrait où il s'est placée le subtil Pascal n'offre pas davantage prise à la discussion qu'un professeur de calcul. Il fallait revenir à l'expérience humaine, concernée au premier chef par la question, et seul le roman pouvait le faire.[10]

And it is precisely with Pascal's abstract assumptions about the experience of human happiness that Gide takes exception. Since "tous les hommes recherchent d'être heureux (cela est sans exception)"[11]; and since, as Méron points out, "dans toute oeuvre d'inspiration janséniste . . . le bonheur périssable de la vie terrestre ne vaut guère, et que le bonheur accordé par Dieu à ses élus est le seul digne de ce nom",[12] Pascal assumes that all but the most perverse will gladly forego human happiness to accept the wager. Gide's dramatically expounded theology counters that he cannot accept a Christianity which argues the mutual exclusivity of human and divine happiness, of human and divine love. Lawrence found that "the novels and poems come unwatched out of one's pen" before the need "to abstract some definite conclusions from one's

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[9]Méron, 119, cites from the Chevalier edition (Paris: Gallimard, Pléiade), in which "Le Pari" appears as fragment 451. My subsequent Pascal references will be taken from the Brunschvicg edition Gide refers to in his 2 September entry (*J*, 176). Brunschvicg numbers "Le Pari" as fragment 233.

[10]Méron, 118.

[11]*Pensées*, fragment 425; cited by Méron, 120.

[12]Méron, 121. See particularly the extension of Pascal's fragment 194, in which he posits that we forget God is our "sole" source of "happiness" when we mistake eternity for nothing, and the nothing of our finite existence for eternity.

experience".[13] Equally, Gide suggests in *La Porte étroite* what he distils four years later into an abstraction: "Que le premier devoir du chrétien est d'être heureux; et tant qu'il n'y atteint pas (au bonheur), il n'a pas réalisé en lui l'enseignement du Christ".[14]

To place too much of the burden of Alissa's tragedy on Pascal's shoulders, however, is to misunderstand the ascetic progression of her journal, which eventually attempts to abandon the French philosopher in favour of Thomas à Kempis. Pessimistic as his mathematical wager appears in the abstract, Pascal is far too engaged in this world to discount entirely the worth of human existence. Balancing the ostensible devaluing of earthly existence are both Pascal's pleasant and amusingly ironic style[15] and the many "fragments" that contradict the rigour of his Jansenism. Tempering, for example, the pronouncement that Gide seems to echo in Alissa's lonely death--"Nous sommes plaisants de nous reposer dans la société de nos semblables: misérables comme nous, impuissants comme nous, ils ne nous aideront pas; on meurra seul"[16]--is Pascal's more balanced view: "Les grandeurs et les misères de l'homme sont tellement visibles, qu'il faut nécessairement que la véritable religion nous enseigne et qu'il y a quelque grand principe de grandeur en l'homme, et qu'il y a un grand principe de misère".[17] The hatred of the body implied in fragments such as 485--"La vraie et unique vertu est donc de se haïr (car on est haïssable par sa concupiscence)"--is softened in the letters to Mlle de Roannez; in a Journal entry penned during the last months of the composition of *La Porte étroite*, Gide defends Pascal on this very point: Pascal "parle volontiers d'un 'corps innocent' que la mort 'afflige'. Il considère comme possible 'la paix entre l'âme et le corps'".[18]

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[13]Moore, 235.

[14]*Journal*, 394.

[15]Among the "Propos attribués a Pascal", is the following comment on his tone and style: "On me demande pourquoi j'ai employé un style agréable, railleur et divertissant. Je réponds que si j'avais écrit d'un style dogmatique il n'y aurait eu que les savants qui l'auraient lu . . . . Ainsi, j'ai cru qu'il fallait écrire d'une manière propre à faire lire mes lettres par les femmes et les gens du monde" (*Oeuvres*, XIV).

[16]*Pensées*, fragment 211.

[17]Ibid., fragment 430. See also fragments 221, 236, 298.

[18]*Journal*, 27 June 1908, 269.

Perhaps a more balanced explanation of Pascal's "failure" is that the longer Alissa is abandoned to her loneliness, the more she concentrates, as all her male mentors have encouraged her to do, on the darker extremities in Pascal; the more she spends time with the humbler ascetic souls, specifically Thomas à Kempis, the more she confuses the severity of their asceticism and Pascal's "sweeter" Jansenism. Alissa's attempt to "banish" Jérôme from her little bookshelf coincides with her "résolution de ne lire pour un temps que la Bible (*l'Imitation* aussi, peut-être)" (168); certainly the humble soul, who wrote The *Imitation of Christ* in his "plain and simple style",[19] satisfies well Alissa's professed need to keep the society of humble religious writers (138); but, most importantly, it is Alissa's failure to "order" properly her love for Jérôme and Christ that sends her to the widely read mystical primer on the detachment from the world necessary to enter into communion with Christ. In the journal entry before her sensual temptation, Alissa notes: "je dirais que je ferais fi d'une joie qui ne serait pas *progressive*" (163); the morning after she admits to Lucile's influence, Alissa fears that she has mistaken profane for spiritual "progress": "Il me semble à présent que je n'ai jamais 'tendu à la perfection' que pour lui. Et que cette perfection ne puisse être atteinte sans lui" (165). When she takes up again the *Imitation,* then, it is not surprising she looks to book I, chapter XI, "Des moyens d'acquérir la paix intérieure, et du soin d'avancer dans la vertu."[20]

> "Oh! si tu savais quelle paix tu acquerrais, et quelle joie tu donnerais aux autres en t'avançant dans la vertu, je m'assure que tu y travaillerais avec plus de soin". (Journal, 169)

And when she still confesses to failure in her next journal entry--"Mais pourquoi entre Vous et moi, posez-Vous partout son image?" (169)--she redoubles her efforts to progress toward virtue, striving , as Thomas advises in the same chapter, to lay the axe to the root of her passions: "Le plus grand, l'unique obstacle, c'est qu'asservis à nos passions . . . nous ne faisons aucun effort pour entrer dans la voie parfaite des Saints. . . . Mettons donc la cognée à la racine de l'arbre, afin que, dégagés des

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[19]Leo Sherley-Price's analysis in the introduction to her Penguin translation of *The Imitation of Christ*, is typical in her praise of à Kempis's simple sincerity. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1952, 1984), 23.

[20]Thomas à Kempis, 43.

passions, nous possédions notre âme en paix".[21] "Mais, mon ami, la sainteté n'est pas un choix; c'est une obligation (le mot était souligné trois fois dans sa lettre)" (132). [22]

Arguably, it is Thomas à Kempis's ascetic lessons for his fellow-religious more than *Les Pensées* that explain the severity of Alissa's "dépoétisation", her increasingly rigourous withdrawal from human society, and her eventual mimesis of Christ's passion, the final necessary step, for Thomas, on the "Royal Road" towards mystical communion with Christ. Throughout the three-step process towards mystical peace--Counsels on "I: Spiritual Life", on "II: Inner Life", and on "III: Inward Consolation"--Thomas reiterates a handful of ideas that echo both thematically and linguistically in Alissa's "progressively" troubled journal and letters, and in her final two meetings with her Jérôme. First, there is the insistence, discussed above (see chapter IV, 36), on avoiding the traps of language.

> Il faut chercher la vérité dans l'Ecriture sainte, et non l'éloquence. Toute l'Ecriture doit être lue dans le même esprit qui l'a dictée. Nous devons y chercher l'utilité, plutôt que la délicatesse du langage. Nous devons lire aussi volontiers les livres simples et pieux, que les livres profonds et sublimes. . . . Si vous voulez en retirer du fruit, lisez avec humilité, avec simplicité, avec foi; et ne cherchez jamais à passer pour habile. (I, 5)[23]

> Ce sont là d'humbles âmes qui causent avec moi simplement. . . . Je sais d'avance que nous ne céderons, ni elles à aucune piège du beau langage, ni moi, en les lisant, à aucune profane admiration. (To Jérôme, 138)
>
> Repris l'Imitation; et non point même dans le texte latin, que je suis trop vaine de comprendre. (Journal, 168)

Second, Thomas à Kempis stresses, even more than Pascal, the need to love Christ *alone*. The command, which exacerbates Alissa's guilt for her devotion to Jérôme, comforts the *Imitation's* intended female readers, nuns who already wear the ring of their heavenly bridegroom.

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[21]Ibid., 43-44..

[22]It seems likely that both Alissa and Gide have in mind both denotations of "la sainteté" (in English, *holiness* and *saintliness*).

[23]Thomas à Kempis, "De la lecture de l'Ecriture sainte" (33-34).

> O vérité, qui êtes Dieu, faites que je sois un avec vous dans un amour éternel. . . . En vous est tout ce que je désire, tout ce que je veux (I, 3).[24] Âme fidèle, hâtez-vous donc de préparer votre coeur pour l'époux . . . et n'y laissez entrer que lui. . . . Il prendra de vous un soin fidèle en toutes choses, de sorte que vous n'aurez plus besoin de rien attendre des hommes. . . . Mettez en Dieu toute votre confiance(II, 1).[25] Tel est votre bien-aimé, qu'il ne veut point de partage; il veut posséder seul votre coeur (II, 7).[26]
>
> Mon Dieu, donnez-moi de ne devoir qu'a Vous cette joie qui lui [Jérôme] seul me faissait connaître. (Journal, 169) Mon Dieu, vous savez bien que j'ai besoin de lui pour Vous aimer. (Journal, 172). Dieu jaloux, qui m'avez dépossédée, emparez-vous donc de mon coeur. (Journal, 175).

Third, the complementary--and ostensibly misanthropic--insistence on the unreliability of our fellow humans.

> Insensé celui qui met son espérance dans les hommes ou dans quelque créature que ce soit(I, 7).[27] L'homme devrait s'affermir tellement en Dieu, qu'il n'eût pas besoin de chercher tant de consolations humaines (I, 12).[28] L'amour de la créature est trompeur et passe bientôt; l'amour de Jésus est stable et fidèle (II, 7).[29]

Here Gide allows Jérôme's failure to visit Alissa for three years after her "dépoétisation" to corroborate ironically Thomas à Kempis's advice. Gide, in fact, makes Jérôme unwittingly betray himself from the outset when, at twelve years of age, he sends Alissa a Christmas card with the lines, "Malheureux l'homme qui fonde/ Sur les hommes son appui" (96). It is Jérôme's failure to rebut Racine, Pascal and à Kempis that precipitates her asceticism; it is Alissa's unspoken fear of his inconstancy which explains the increasing desperateness of her journal entries.

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[24]Ibid., "De la doctrine de la vérité" (28).
[25]Ibid., "De la conversation intérieure" (93).
[26]Ibid., "Qu'il faut aimer Jesus-Christ par-dessus toutes choses" (108).
[27]Ibid., "Qu'il faut fuir l'orgueil et les vaines espérances" (36).
[28]Ibid., "De l'avantage de l'adversité" (46).
[29]Ibid., "Qu'il faut aimer Jésus-Christ par-dessus toutes choses" (106).

Fourth, the death-orientation fuelled by the "hatefulness" of earthly existence and the constant fight to conquer one's "natural" self.

> J'apprends à mépriser les biens de la terre, à dédaigner ce qui passe, à rechercher et à goûter ce qui est éternel (III, 43).[30] *Les jours d'ici-bas sont courts et mauvais* (Gen. 47:9), pleins de douleur et d'angoisse (III, 48).[31]
>
> C'est là qui devrait nous occuper uniquement: combattre contre nous-mêmes, devenir chaque jour plus forts contre nous, chaque jour faire quelque progrès dans le bien(I,3).[32] Votre grâce, et une grâce très grande, est nécessaire pour vaincre la nature *inclinée au mal dès l'enfance* [Rom. 7:23] (III, 55).[33]

> O Seigneur! . . . Enseignez-moi à différer, à reculer jusqu'à Vous mon bonheur. (Journal,162). [Alissa's last words to Jérôme] Non, ne viens pas plus loin. Adieu, mon bien-aimé. C'est maintenant que va commencer... le meilleur"(153).
>
> [In response to Jérôme's asking what the soul could prefer to happiness, Alissa replies] "La sainteté". . . . Tout mon bonheur ouvrait les ailes, s'échappait de moi vers les cieux" (129). [After she is aroused by the warmth and pulsation of Jérôme's body, Alissa admits] J'ai très mal dormi cette nuit, inquiète, oppressée, misérable, obsédée par le souvenir du passé. . . . Lorsque j'étais enfant, c'est à cause de lui déjà que je souhaitais d'être belle". (Journal, 165)

Fifth, à Kempis provides the weapon to fight her "nature" (Alissa's human love for Jérôme), the formulaic asceticism manifested in Alissa's "dépoétisation".

> La grâce se complaît dans les choses simples et humbles; elle ne dédaigne point ce qu'il y a de plus rude, et ne refuse point de se vêtir de haillons. . . . Elle favorise plutôt le pauvre que le riche. . . . La grâce supporte avec constance la pauvreté (III, 54).[34] Cherchez alors un refuge dans d'humbles occupations extérieures, et dans les

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[30]Ibid., "Contre la vaine science du siècle" (252).

[31]Ibid., "De l'éternité bienheureuse, et des misères de cette vie" (266).

[32]Ibid., "De la doctrine de vérité" (29).

[33]Ibid., "De la corruption de la nature, et de l'efficace de la grâce divine" (292).

[34]Ibid., "Des divers mouvements de la nature et de la grâce" (289-90).

> bonnes oeuvres une distraction qui vous ranime (III, 51).[35]
>
> [Jérôme describes the details of what he calls Alissa's "dépoétisation"] Une nouvelle façon de coiffure, plate et tirée . . . un malséant corsage, de couleur morne, d'étoffe laide au toucher (134). Elle reprit l'ouvrage de couture, de rapiéçage. . . . Ce travail l'absorbait complètement (135). Je ne venais qu'après les soins toujour renaissants du ménage, qu'après . . . les visites aux pauvres dont elle s'occupait de plus en plus (141).

Sixth, the final stage of the "imitation", to welcome "suffering" as a sign of God's favour, the need to bear Christ's cross to attain sainthood.

> Il n'y a de salut pour l'âme, ni d'espérance de vie éternelle, que dans la Croix . . . . [Jésus] est mort pour vous sur la Croix, afin que vous aussi vous portiez votre Croix, et que vous aspiriez à mourir sur la Croix. . . . Quel Saint a été en ce monde sans Croix et sans tribulation? . . . Toute la vie de Jésus-Christ n'a été qu'une Croix et un long martyre: et vous cherchez le repos et la joie! . . . Rien n'est plus agréable à Dieu, rien ne vous est plus salutaire en ce monde, que de souffrir avec joie pour Jésus-Christ . . . parce que vous seriez alors plus semblable à Jésus-Christ et plus conforme à tous les Saints. (II, 12)[36]

Taking the "imitation" to its final extremity, Alissa calls out to her imaginary disciples with Christ's words in the garden--

> "À présent levez-vous. Voici l'heure" (Journal, 175)[37]
>
> "Heureux *dès à présent*, disait votre sainte parole, heureux dès à présent ceux qui meurent dans le Seigneur" (Journal entry on the eve of Alissa's death, 177).

It would seem, then, that Gide read *The Imitation of Christ*, second in popularity only to the Bible as a Christian religious text, for the same reasons that he reread Pascal: to better identify with the sensitive religious young woman torn between equally passionate earthly and

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[35]Ibid., "Qu'il faut s'occuper d'oeuvres extérieures, quand l'âme est fatiguée des exercices spirituels" (280).

[36]Ibid., "De la sainte voie de la Croix" (124-29).

[37]Matthew 26:45-46: "Voici l'heure est venue . . . . Levez-vous".

divine desires; to understand the inevitability of Alissa's tragic rigour when, abandoned by Jérôme, she has only her ascetic advisers to examine her conscience and point her toward "salvation". The first notebook of Alissa's journal seems to suggest the manner in which the à Kempis and Pascal combine to encourage Alissa in her ascetic rigour. The "sweeter" Pascal seduces her to "submit" to God in the letters to Mlle de Roannez that Gide so admired: "On ne sent pas son lien quand on suit volontairement celui qui entraîne; mais quand on commence à résister et à marcher en s'éloignant on souffre bien" (170). But, alongside Pascal, Alissa places a harsher reminder that real Christian "submission" demands that one accept rather than shun suffering.

> Entrez dans mon coeur et dans mon âme pour y porter mes souffrances et pour continuer d'endurer en moi ce qui vous reste à souffrir de votre Passion". (170)

Alissa ultimately takes the way of the cross prescribed in *The Imitation*.

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2. The Pagan Mystic

The *passivity* of Alissa's first mystical intimation attests to its authenticity. Having cleared her mind of all preconceptions, she sets out on a voyage of discovery in a forest that recalls Dante's "savage" "selva oscura"(*Inferno* 1:1-5)--un "bosquet toujours plus sauvage" (160). The allusion suggests that the savage forest might have represented for the "Christian" Alissa, as it did for Dante, alienation from the Christian God. But the Alissa looking to learn this new southern "language" is seduced by the land to join an animistic choir. Where Dante saw only obscurity, Alissa, "in spite of herself" ("malgré moi"), finds "clarity". The evergreen oaks Jérôme had admired in the gardens at the Villa Borghese or Doria-Pamfili sheltered "une clairière étroite, mysterieuse et se penchent au-dessus d'un gazon doux aux pieds, invitant le choeur des nymphes" (160). This "pagan" image of God evokes a primitive fear associated with

animal nature,[38] filling Alissa with an involuntary sense of 'mystical' wonder:

> Je m'étonne, m'effarouche presque de ce qu'ici mon sentiment de la nature, si profondément chrétien à Fongueuesemare, malgré moi, devienne un peu mythologique. Pourtant elle était encore religieuse la sorte de crainte qui de plus en plus m'oppressait. (160)

Alissa experiences the *ineffable* sense of awe traditionally associated with the powerful God of the Old Testament, the reverential "crainte de Dieu".

Alissa's *noetic* insight into her "religious" bond (in the sense of the Latin *religare,* to be "tied to" an absolute) with sensual nature "oppresses" her because, as à Kempis would have warned her, "la nature est pleine d'artifice; elle attire, elle surprend, elle séduit, elle n'a jamais d'autre fin qu'elle même. La grâce, au contraire, agit avec simplicité, et fuit jusqu'à la moindre apparence du mal".[39] It is *nature* here, however, that wears the simple face of truth ("crystalline", "silent", "pure"), leaving Alissa powerless to resist its "sudden" call. This, she admits, far from being Dante's *selva oscura,* is Virgil's "sacred grove"[40]:

> Je murmurais ces mots: *hic nemus.* L'air était cristallin; il faisait un silence étrange. . . . lorsque tout à coup un chant d'oiseau, unique, s'est élevé, si près de moi, si pathétique, si pur qu'il me sembla que toute la nature l'attendait. Mon coeur battait très fort
> . . . (160)

Alissa's body attests to an experience of sensual oneness that lies beyond language, just as Michel's does in his first experience of oneness with

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[38]*Le Petit Robert* gives as the first denotation of "effaroucher, "Effrayer (un animal) de sorte qu'on le fait fuir. *Effaroucher le gibier, le poisson*".

[39]Thomas à Kempis, II, 54, (168).

[40]Virgil uses *nemus* to refer to Diana's sacred grove in the *Aeneid* 7:759. It is interesting that Alissa associates Latin with the pagan and, perhaps, sensuous again later when she decides the language of *L'Internelle Consolacion* distracts her from her ascetic intentions: "J'ai cessé de lire *L'Internelle Consolacion.* Cette ancienne langue m'amusait fort, mais me distrayait et la joie quasi païenne que j'y goûte n'a rien à voir avec l'édification que je me proposais d'y chercher" (168). "L'Internelle Consolacion" is the title of the first French translation of Thomas à Kempis (Paris: P. Jannet, 1856), though Alissa appears to use the title here to refer to the original Latin version.

"cette terre africaine"--"Elle riait d'un printemps forcené dont je sentais le retentissement et comme le double en moi-même" (*L'Immoraliste*, 54-55).

Subsequent letters and journal entries testify to both the Aigues-Vives experience's profound modification of Alissa's life and her powerlessness to deny the veracity of its insights. Alissa's troubling discovery of herself in nature rather than in the Christian God, the same discovery Gide had made in Algeria, explains, Defaux posits, "cette 'inexplicable tristesse', cette 'mélancolie incompréhensible' et 'étrange' dont elle fait part à Jérôme dans ses lettres, et qu'elle note dans son Journal sans avoir le courage d'en reconnaître et d'en avouer clairement la raison".[41] But, as has been discussed above, Alissa's understandable fear of Jérôme's constancy and her doubts that he has made a similar discovery during his travels also help explain why she confides to her journal a revelation which, she can only assume, would frighten Jérôme. It is at this point that Alissa's instinct and experience collide with the inherited discourse of her ascetic advisers in her search for truth, that the dialectic between earthly and heavenly "joy" begins. And when Jérôme fails to respond to a parallel call to sensual nature--Alissa's near ecstasy when she feels "la chaleur et le frémissement"(165) of Jérôme's body, recalling the violent "beating of her heart" in the Dionysian forest--her prayer echoes à Kempis's reminder: "la grâce . . . fuit jusqu'à la moindre apparence du mal": "Seigneur, enseignez-moi l'horreur de tout ce qui a quelque apparence du mal" (165). The following morning's letter to Jérôme suggests that the 'dichotomising' Pascal and à Kempis have successfully convinced Alissa that she must choose between what they consider to be the specious earthly and the true heavenly "bonheur": "Je m'inquiétai vite ensuite de cet étrange contentement de tout mon être que j'éprouvais près de toi; 'un contentement tel, me disais-tu, que je ne souhaite rien au-delà!' Hélas! c'est cela même qui m'inquiète" (130). Alissa contradicts the experience of her heart, insisting to Jérôme, "ce contentement plein de délices, je ne puis le tenir pour véritable. . . . Véritable! ah! Dieu nous garde qu'il le soit! nous sommes nés pour un autre bonheur..." By punctuating Alissa's second sensual experience with the Latin that signalled the advent of the first, Gide stresses that this is the point at which the ascetic discourse gains the upper hand. The pagan

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[41]Defaux, 102.

sacred grove she had associated with Jérôme's evergreen oaks--"hic nemus"--is routed by the Christian God. She writes to her cousin, "*Adieu, mon ami.* Hic incipit amor Dei" (131).

In finding that Alissa experiences in her second mystical experience "un moment suprême où elle croit avoir atteint à l'absolu",[42] Bertalot fails to mention that she finds her "absolute" in Jérôme rather than in the Christian God. This time Alissa facilitates the moment, as does André Walter,[43] by spending the night in prayer and meditation. And, as is true in her literary progenitor's mysticism,[44] in spite of their attempts to live completely in the spirit, "l'âme ne cherche pas de trop lointaines amours où le corps ne participe" (*André Walter*, 50).

> Depuis ce matin un grand calme. Passé presque toute la nuit en méditation, en prière. Soudain il m'a semblé que m'entourait, que descendait en moi une sorte de paix lumineuse, pareille à l'imagination qu'enfant je me faisais du Saint-Esprit. Je me suis aussitôt couchée, craignant de ne devoir ma joie qu'à une exaltation nerveuse; je me suis endormie assez vite, sans que cette félicité m'eût quittée. Elle est là ce matin tout entière. J'ai maintenant la certitude qu'il viendra. (172-3)

Alissa's mystical confusion manifests itself in the linguistic ambiguity of whether "il" refers to the certain arrival of the Holy Spirit or of Jérôme; Gide seems to be purposely ambiguous about whether this is a true mystical experience or merely the ascetic "artificial ecstasy" of which André Walter warned.[45] Juliette had been sufficiently concerned about the consequences of Alissa's ascetic rigour to call in a doctor (154), and even Alissa worries that a "nervous exaltation" might explain her mystical joy. Counterpoint to the physiological concerns are the cogent sincerity of the journal and the presence of the "mystical set": the

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[42]Enrico Umberto Bertalot, *André Gide et l'attente de Dieu* (Paris: Minard, 1967), 108.

[43]Bertalot, identifying a similar mystical experience in *Saül* and in *Bethsabé*, assumes, "ce fut certainement une expérience personnelle de l'auteur, car elle revient souvent dans ses écrits" (108).

[44]Walter, whose dialectic between body and soul, sensual abandon and ascetic restrain, prefigures Alissa's in so many ways, knows by "la sagesse" what Alissa intuits: "La sagesse voudrait qu'on les mène [le corps et l'âme] ensemble, qu'on fasse converger leurs poursuites" (*AW*, 50). Still, as does Alissa, he chooses a metaphorical "cellule nue", an asceticism which, even he recognizes, leads to "l'extase artificielle" (*Les Cahiers d'André Walter*, *OC*, I, 140).

[45]See preceding footnote.

suddenness of the transport; the simultaneous surrounding and descending illumination, recalling St. Teresa's paradoxical being in God while having God in her; the need to avow the ineffable by seizing upon metaphors of light. Present, too, this time is the "grand calme", the luminous peace associated with the Holy Ghost as "Comforter", the bringer of Christ's Peace which Thomas à Kempis had promised Alissa: "Peace, I leave you with you, my peace I give unto you" (John 14:26-27). Finally, the noetic apprehension, beyond reason and the senses, of the otherwise inexplicable knowledge concerning Jérôme's imminent arrival.

But this peace cannot last. Jérôme the saving Christ fails to see that Alissa wants him to break down the narrow door of her "petit potager". Three days after his visit, Juliette writes to her cousin (154), Alissa leaves Fongueusemare to immure herself in the "naked walls" of her cell. Jérôme's failure must seem to Alissa a verification of à Kempis's insistence that, by seeking Christ alone, "I have found myself and You", denying the authority of Alissa's mystical apprehension that she finds herself in Jérôme--"Je ne suis qu'avec lui" (163). The morning of her flight she prays, "Dieu jaloux . . . emparez-vous donc de mon coeur" (175); the day of her arrival at the nursing home, she repents of having wanted to find her "authentic self" in a human Christ:

> Je n'ai pris avec moi d'autre livre que la Bible; mais aujourd'hui, plus haut que les paroles que j'y lis, résonne en moi ce sanglot éperdu de Pascal:
> "Tout ce qui n'est pas Dieu ne peut pas remplir mon attente".
> O trop humaine joie que mon coeur imprudent souhaitait... Est-ce pour obtenir ce cri, Seigneur! que vous m'avez désespérée? (176)

But Thomas à Kempis and Pascal prove to be no more reliable sources of support than is Jérôme, who had pledged his life to shelter Alissa. Thomas promises her "peace" if she strives to "order" her self rightly, and Pascal encourages her to wager everything on God, for you have nothing to lose but the finite--the "trop humaine joie que mon coeur imprudent souhaitait"--an infinity of happiness to win.[46] Pascal's

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[46]*Pensées*, fragment 233.

own wager had been awarded with his "second conversion", the mystical experience of God recorded on a piece of parchment the philosopher carried with him all his life. A mathematician even in his mysticism, Pascal chronicled as precisely as possible the transience of his insight: "L'an de grâce 1654. . . . Depuis environ dix heures et demi du soir jusques environ minuit et demi".[47] The knowledge is "certitude, certitude" that he has won the wager: "Père juste, le monde ne t'a point connu, mais je t'ai connu". The living waters have forsaken Pascal, leaving him a dried-up fountain--"*Dereliquerunt me fontem aquae vivae*"-- but Jesus Christ will fill him for eternity. The revelation brings peace, an ineffable happiness that finds utterance in "Joie, joie, joie, pleurs de joie".[48]

In her penultimate journal entry, Alissa consents to Pascal's advice, ready to wager any hopes of earthly happiness for celestial happiness:

> "Joie, joie, joie, pleurs de joie..."
> Au-dessus de la joie humaine et par-delà toute douleur, oui, je pressens cette joie radieuse. Ce rocher où je ne puis atteindre, je sais bien qu'il a nom: bonheur... Je comprends que toute ma vie est vaine sinon pour aboutir au bonheur...Ah! pourtant vous le promettiez, Seigneur, à l'âme renonçante et pure. (177)

Again Alissa awaits the dawn, hoping that the mystical revelation of heavenly joy will come at the hour of the Resurrection, the same moment she had experienced the human "joy" of Jérôme's annunciation. But Gide's allusion to Pascal's conversion is ironic, the reminder that Alissa had a great deal to lose in her ascetic wager.[49] The sudden ravishment of her last mystical revelation illumines a knowledge that quickly routs the peace promised to those who die in the Lord, the peace promised her by à Kempis for rightly "ordering" herself.

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[47]*Pensées*, "Mémorial", (Brunschvicg , XII, 3-7).

[48]Méron does not connect the citation with its mystical context.

[49]It seems again that Gide's fiction is well ahead of his abstractions. While he has nothing but praise for Pascal in the first thirty-eight years of his Journal entries, Gide criticizes on 9 August 1937 the same spiritual pride in the Jansenist that *La Porte étroite* had criticizes in Alissa: "Le besoin qu'a Pascal de désespérer l'homme et de saper ses joies, . . . cette systématique dépréciation du jeu, de l'art ('quelle vanité que la peinture...'), de tout ce qui distrait l'homme de la nécessité de la mort--me paraît beaucoup plus vain que le plaisir même" (*J*, 1268).

As if to punish Alissa for attempting to separate body and spirit, Gide has the moment toll throughout both flesh and soul.

> Ce matin un crise de vomissements m'a brisée. Je me suis sentie, sitôt après, si faible qu'un instant j'ai pu espérer de mourir. Mais non; il s'est d'abord fait dans tout mon être un grand calme; puis une angoisse s'est emparée de moi, un frisson de la chair et de l'âme; c'était comme *l'eclaircissement* brusque et désenchanté de ma vie. . .
>
> Je voudrais mourir à présent, vite, avant d'avoir compris de nouveau que je suis seule. (177-78)

In *Numquid et Tu. . .?* (1916-1919) Gide refines the abstractions that came out of his pen dramatically in *La Porte étroite*. "Joie, joie", the "divine" word is indeed the "secret" to understanding the Gospels, but not a joy that would pit human happiness against spiritual happiness.[50] Gide's definition pits, rather, joy against the ascetics' call to suffer, self-abandon against their self-restraint, the sacredness of this life against their need to undervalue it. Imitating Christ in his suffering, Gide holds, is to render Christ's Passion useless. It is by attaining "joy" that we show our gratitude to Christ. "Vouloir porter la croix du Christ, souhaiter d'épouser ses souffrances, n'est-ce pas méconnaître son don?"[51]

Gide implies that à Kempis finds life hateful and Pascal believes it to be "nothing to lose" because they misinterpret eternal life as solely a state subsequent to human death. Alissa's perceived need to put off "le bonheur" for "la sainteté", "la joie humaine" for "la joie radieuse", comes from the pernicious confusion frequently inculcated in the Christian mind between "future" life and "eternal" life.[52] In the last reflection of *Numquid et Tu. . .?* Gide returns to a passage Alissa had read in Pascal, prompting her to comment that the Jansenist "avait . . . vidé la vie présente de sa joie" (139): "Qui veut sauver sa vie la perdra" (140). Alissa later repents in her Journal for her "shameful" appraisal of Pascal's pessimism, though Gide's present interpretation--one whose spirit already informed *La Porte étroite* -- suggests the accuracy of her original insight. Pascal could not equate human life with "nothing" if he

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[50]Journal, "Numquid et Tu . . .?", entry for 23 June 1916, 600.
[51]"Numquid", 23 June 1916, 601.
[52]Ibid, July 15 1916, 604.

had understood, as Gide does, that, when Christ says these words to Peter (Matt. 16:24) he invites him "to participate at once in the eternity of life". "La vie éternelle que propose le Christ, et à la participation de laquelle tout son enseignement nous convie, cette vie éternelle n'a rien de futur; ce n'est pas point par delà la mort qu'elle nous attend; et même il n'y a aucun espoir, si nous n'y parvenons pas aussitôt, que nous puissions jamais y atteindre".[53]

This invitation to find eternity in the present, to find the divine in the mortal, lends credence to Alissa's first mystical revelation: that the sensuous nature God speaks in the south is "religious too". With no one to corroborate her insight, and powerless to deny its authority, she resorts tragically to Pascal and à Kempis, who finish what Jérôme had begun: imposing *his* "natural" restraint, his confusion of renunciation and happiness (30), upon one whose "âme sans apprêt, restait de la plus naturelle beauté. Sa vertu gardait tant d'aisance et de grâce qu'elle semblait un abandon" (32). This naturally happy "soul" recalls one of Gide's own Journal entries, in which he spoke of the ascetic restraint of his own nature:

> Le christianisme, avant tout, console; mais il y a des âmes naturellement heureuses et qui n'ont pas besoin d'être consolées. Alors, celles-ci, le christianisme commence par les rendre malheureuses, n'ayant sinon pas d'action sur elles.
>
> Alors, cessant d'appeler tentations mes désirs, cessant d'y résister, je m'efforçai tout au contraire de les suivre. . . . L'abandon de soi m'apparut une supérieure sagesse; il me semblait que j'y trouverais de plus grands profits pour mon être. . . . L'habitude de l'ascétisme était telle qu'il me fallut d'abord m'efforcer vers la joie. . . . Je m'étonnais que la nature fût si belle, et j'appelais tout: la nature.[54]

With no one to encourage Alissa's natural inclination toward "joy", how could she know it is the key to the Gospels; with no one to confirm the "religious" beauty of nature and self-abandon, how could she know that they profit the soul more than the ascetic pattern she had been given by her spiritual advisers.

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[53]Ibid.

[54]*Journal*, 10 October 1893, 44-5.

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3. St. Claire of Assisi

To find incredulous Alissa's willingness to believe that ascetic renunciation is the road to "peace" is to ignore one of the earliest and most enduring Christian paradoxes. As Elaine Pagels explains, "celibacy (to say nothing of fasting and other forms of renunciation) is an extreme form of self restraint. Yet as Christians saw it, celibacy involved rejection of "the world" of ordinary society and its multitudinous entanglements and was thereby a way to gain control over one's own life".[55] To be gained, too, is a "heroism" denied the suffering Maiden, forever the spiritual muse. Pagels speaks of the "spiritual athletes " and ascetic celebrities in the first centuries of Christianity, but such cultural recognition of extraordinary "virtue" was still alive in the world and age described in *La Porte étroite*. Joan of Arc, whose heroism extended beyond the religious into the political, as Gide playfully notes in a 1909 Journal entry,[56] had just been canonised; in 1858, the fourteen-year-old Bernadette Soubirous experienced her mystical visions of the Virgin Mary;[57] and even closer to Alissa's home, St. Thérèse de Lisieux (d. 1897) "inflamed the hearts and minds of the entire Catholic world at the beginning of this century with her naive and simple mixture of excessive egoism and emotional self-sacrifice".[58] While Gide makes no mention of Thérèse in his writings, it seems unlikely that one so interested in religion could have ignored the many ways in which Alissa's life intersected with that of this local Norman heroine.

Alissa's contemporary, Thérèse, is of interest because, as Monica Furlong explains in the saint's recent biography, she "has been cast in one of the favourite moulds of traditional female sanctity, the mould of virginity, of suffering, of drastic self-abnegation", the same mould or

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[55]Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988), 78.
[56]*Journal*, January 1909, 271.
[57]Warner, 249-51
[58]Warner, 312.

"pattern" used to create the icons of Madonna and Maiden, the same mould in which Alissa was cast. Thérèse was a middle-class Norman girl who inherited the renunciation and dualistic attitudes toward women of the Jansenist tradition, a dualism she hoped to transcend through mystical ecstasy.[59] Her passionate love for Christ eventually "cut her off from ordinary human contact at the age of fifteen".[60] An adept of Thomas à Kempis, Thérèse set out to save the world in the same way that Alissa hopes to save Jérôme: "Our Lord let me see clearly that if I wanted to win souls I'd got to do it by bearing a cross; so the more suffering came my way, the more strongly did suffering attract me".[61] She "loved" her "little cell", the objective correlative for her isolation and renunciation, just as Alissa initially loved hers: "Cette chambre me plaît. La parfaite propreté suffit à l'ornement des murs" (176). Most importantly, Thérèse's rigorous asceticism, perhaps like that of Alissa, provided at once a passionate conjugal relationship and a heroism independent of men.

St. Teresa described her states of mystical ecstasy as a "spiritual marriage" with Christ, a communion in which she managed, as Jesus promised, "to dwell in [him], and I in [her]" (John 6:56). Veronese painted seven versions of "St. Catherine's Mystical Wedding", in which the infant bridegroom symbolically satisfies both mother and bride.[62] Thérèse's enthusiasm for this marriage without any of the attendant problems of sexuality, childbearing, and human inconstancy rises to that of the most enamoured fiancée. On the eve of her profession she prays, "I know quite well that nothing in heaven or earth will prevent you from coming to me, and making me, once and forever, your bride".[63] She even amused herself by sketching a wedding invitation: "Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth, Lord of the whole world, and the glorious Virgin Mary, queen of the heavenly court, invite you to take part in the

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[59] Monica Furlong, *Thérèse of Lisieux*. London: Virago Press, 1987, 2-3.

[60] Furlong, 1.

[61] Thérèse of Lisieux, *Autobiography of a Saint* (*L'Histoire d'une âme*), trans. Ronald Knox (London: Harvill Press, 1958, 184. Compare Thérèse's prayer with the one following Alissa's plea to save Jérôme: "Entrez dans mon coeur et dans mon âme pour y porter mes souffrances et pour continuer d'endurer en moi ce qui vous reste à souffrir de votre Passion" (170).

[62] Terisio Pignatti, *Veronese: L'Opera Completa*, II (Venice: Alfieri, 1976).

[63] *Autobiography*, 194-95.

wedding of their Son Jesus Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, to Thérèse Martin . . .[64]

Alissa's attempted divine marriage, troubled by the existence of a human lover, arguably aspires even more particularly, as Tony Hunt suggests, to the *ménage à trois* Héloïse effects with Abélard.[65] Gide might even be suggesting that Alissa plays St. Claire to Jérôme's St. Francis, a "pattern" variation which allows the virgin ascetic to maintain communion with lovers human and divine. Just when Alissa begins to experience desire for Jérôme ("je t'ai souhaité là, senti là, près de moi, avec une violence telle que tu l'auras peut-être senti" (100), she is able to transform her sensual thirst for Jérôme into submission in her admiration for St. Francis: "On avait terriblement soif dans la montagne au-dessus d'Assise! mais que le verre d'eau du Franciscain m'a paru bon! O mon ami! je regarde à travers toi chaque chose. Que j'aime ce que tu m'écris à propos de saint François. . . . Mettre son ambition non à se révolter, mais à servir" (101). Prior to her sensual awakening at Aigues-Vives, she is able to enter, through Francis, into a "joyful" pantheistic communion with Jérôme, while being faithful to Christ, 'and none other'.[66]

> Oui, mon ami, c'est une exhortation à la joie, comme tu dis, que j'écoute et comprends dans 'l'hymne confus' de la nature. Je l'entends dans chaque chant d'oiseau; je la respire dans le parfum de chaque fleur, et j'en viens à ne comprendre plus que l'adoration comme seule forme de la prière--redisant avec saint François: Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! "e non altro", le coeur empli d'un inexprimable amour. (102-3)

And when she comprehends in the "sacred grove" that nature's confusing hymn is a call to sensual abandon, a vocation to which Jérôme

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[64]Ibid., 203-204.

[65]See Chapter IV and Hunt, 183-87.

[66]As Zvi Levy says, "le danger que pourrait comporter cette communion qui, pour être spirituelle, n'en a pas moins des composantes un peu païennes, est éludé par le refus par Alissa du véritable 'message' de la nature; elle refuse de décoder 'l'hymne confus'. Pour mieux encore en écarter le sens, Alissa revêt de piété chrétienne son exaltation. . . . Alissa peut ainsi assumer sans conflit apparent cette joie profane, sous le couvert d'un amour transcendé. Mais, surtout, la réjouissance en l'amour de Dieu recouvre et dissimule le sentiment de la séparation" (*Jérôme "Agonistes": Les structures dramatiques et les procédures narratives de "La Porte étroite"* [Paris: Librairie A. G. Nizet, 1984], 89-90.

remains deaf, she plays out a pattern of renunciation remarkably similar to St Claire's, a pattern that melds codes romantic and ascetic.

When Francis, "ever romantic at heart", took Claire from her Patrician life, he "saw himself as a knight-errant rescuing a damsel in distress".[67] Michel de La Bedoyere holds that Francis's avoidance of unnecessary contact with women "may have been connected with his knightly troubadour hero-worship of woman, symbol of Poverty, and of Our Lady, rather than flesh-and-blood woman".[68] According to Anthony Mockler, this was one of the reasons Francis and Claire did not "re-enact" "the tragedy of Abelard and Heloise", and lived their lives "separately in body though united in spirit, the woman closed up in her convent, the man wandering far and near, in mutual respect and affection".[69] Francis settled Claire and her small community at San Amiano where, it appears, she took his rules on poverty and physical austerity farther than he would have liked. Claire, aware of her own sensual nature--"Notre chair n'est pas une chair de bronze . . . que bien au contraire nous sommes fragiles et inclinés à toutes les faiblesses corporelles"[70]--remained loyal to both Francis and a jealous God, "prenant un époux de plus noble race, le Seigneur Jésus Christ, qui gardera votre virginité toujours immaculée et intacte".[71] To combat her own sensual desires, which she assumes pose a threat to Jérôme's 'Saintliness", Alissa demands of herself a role remarkably similar to that of the founder of the Poor Claires: the Dépoetisation" to foil her earthly beauty, the celebration of poverty, the meditation on Christ's passion,[72] the sequestration in her cell", the humble coterie of her "order": "Quelques malades de la maison de santé avaient tenu à assister à la cérémonie et à accompagner le corps au cimetière" (155).

Freed from the demands of the normal conjugal relationship and still joined in communion with Francis and Christ, Claire founds and

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[67]Lord Langford, *Francis of Assisi: A Life for All Seasons* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978), 52.

[68] Michel de La Bedoyere, *Francis: A Biography of Saint Francis of Assisi* (London: Collins, 1962), 118.

[69] Anthony Mockler, *Francis of Assisi: The Wandering Years* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1976), 34.

[70] Clara de Assisi, *Écrits*, ed. Marie-France Becker (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1985), 39.

[71]*Écrits*, 40.

[72]*Écrits*, 42:Claire insists that her nuns meditate continuously on the Mysteries of the Cross.

administers her own order and, more importantly, attains a "heroism" denied women in any other social arena. Maggie Tulliver, another passionately religious young heroine, thought she had found in à Kempis "a sublime height to be reached without the help of outward things--here was insight, and strength and conquest, to be won by means entirely within her own soul".[73] Gide, looking back to *La Porte étroite,* concedes that Alissa's asceticism had attained a certain independent heroism, though sadly it was an "héroïsme gratuit":

> Alissa, je me souviens, si sensible . . . restait les yeux secs à l'instant de quitter Jérôme; non par grand raidissement intérieur, mais parce que tout ce qui se rattachait à Jérôme restait pour elle entaché de vertu. La pensée de son amant appelait chez elle immédiatement une sorte de sursaut d'héroïsme, non volontaire, inconscient presque. . . . Héroïsme absolument inutile.[74]

Useless, perhaps, but heroism nonetheless, and a choice elected from among a paltry handful of possibilities. Jérôme's failure to respond to Alissa's love for her niece implies to Alissa he had little interest in the "common happiness" of marriage; his impassivity to her sensual desire constrains what should have been a natural abandon in her; wandering far and near in his theological pilgrimages, Jérôme has even denied Alissa the promised role of "collaboratrice" in his projected history of religious philosophy (68-9). The heroism of the virgin martyr Alissa can attain on her own. When Teresa of Avila drew up the rigorous rule of the Discalced, Monica Furlong understands that Thérèse would have heard it as "a call to a life of heroism, a call often answered by those who otherwise might have had little opportunity to be heroes",[75] a heroism, ironically, which took the female "virtues" of virginity, humility, and passivity, and turned them to heroic account in a currency recognised by a male hierarchy. Sarah Beckwith, referring to the English mystic St. Margery Kempe, suspects that the identification with Christ and the mimesis of his Passion might well constitute "a laying claim to . . . a power" held otherwise exclusively in male hands.[76] Even Jérôme, who

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[73]George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss,* 233.
[74]*OC,* VI, 40 ("Journal sans dates").
[75]Furlong, 76.
[76]Beckwith, 68.

eventually decries the asceticism which he had set in motion, recognises as heroic Alissa's decision to devote herself to God:

> Contre le piège de la vertu, je restais sans défense. Tout héroïsme, en m'éblouissant, m'attirait--car je ne le séparais pas de l'amour. (131)

Gide's ironic logic insists, however, that Alissa's heroism fails precisely because she remains subjected to a male delineated "pattern", according to which the male delineated virtues, heroic or not, keep women exactly where the male advisers would have them. Pure as Pascal's and Thomas's motives might have been, their asceticism remains, like that of St. Paul and Jérôme, an effective instrument of female subjection. Whether or not Gide meant for Alissa's end to recall that of Blaesilla, one of St. Jerome's spiritual advisees, it is likely he knew of the tragedy. Insisting on the superiority of celibacy over the married state, Jerome advised that ascetic rigour alone could expiate the 'error' of the recently-widowed young woman. Even when she suffered a prolonged fever, Jerome advised a program of extreme austerity. While many angrily criticised the unrepentant Jerome when Blaesilla died, her mother and sister remained his disciples.[77] Gide's Jérôme, who never thought Alissa so beautiful as when, like Blaesilla, she had wasted away in the flesh (151), unwittingly profits from having sent Alissa, as it were, to a nunnery: he remains free to fashion his platonic ideal as he pleases, free to pursue his "énorme travail" (68) without the encumbrances of a wife and family, free to ignore his sexual insecurity. Perhaps, then, Gide's final irony is that Jérôme and his patron saint, Racine, Corneille,[78] Pascal, and à Kempis were right: "Malheureux l'homme qui fonde/Sur les hommes son appui". In relying on these advisers to direct her "triangular desires" Alissa suffers the same fate as Quixote. Girard explains,

> Desire projects a dream universe around the hero [who] escapes from his fantasies only on his deathbed.[79]

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[77]See, among other accounts: Pagels, 90-1; Warner, 74.
[78]Due to Alissa's misattribution and, perhaps, by virtue of *Polyeucte.*
[79]Girard, 18.

IV. The Fatal Woman: "Pride of Life"

Overview

O what can ail thee Knight at arms
    Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has withered from the Lake
    And no birds sing! . . .

I saw pale Kings and Princes too
    Pale warriors death pale were they all
They cried La belle dame sans merci
    Thee hath in thrall

--"La Belle Dame sans Merci", John Keats

> The lights, the civic uniform was a trick played, the people as they moved were only dummies exposed. [Ursula] could see beneath their pale, wooden pretence of composure and civic purposefulness the dark stream that contained them all. . . . "What are you, you pale citizens?" her face seemed to say, gleaming. (415)
>
> They went to a restaurant and drank chianti. But Skrebensky's pale, wan look did not go away. (436)
>
> ***The Rainbow***[1]

The analysis of the final icon looks to Mario Praz's chapter on "La Belle Dame Sans Merci", but to find that Lawrence and Gide provide a paradoxical reversal to the type of the Fatal Woman. With her "pride of life",[2] she offers resurrection rather than destruction, a cult of life opposed to the other icons' cults of death. Through her the authors suggest the need to accept the full breadth of human potential, a spectrum ranging from the icon at one extremity to that at the other. Where cultural mythologies separate, Lawrence and Gide aspire to combine, insisting on a harmony of the spiritual and the sensual, the rediscovery of our entire "authentic self". Gide's and Lawrence's two most exotic Fatal Women, the Creole Lucile and the "Creole-like"

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[1]D. H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, ed. Mark Kinkead-Weekes (Cambridge: Cambridge. University Press, 1989). Subsequent parenthetical page numbers refer to this edition.

[2]Praz, 32.

Ursula, invite the authors' characters to this fuller life, and destroy only when their knights, as do Jérôme *Palissier* and "pale" Anton Skrebensky, deny the dark stream of life.

If the Fatal Woman is, like the other female icons, a "mirror image" of the male ego and male-concocted cultural mythologies, it would seem her reflection should be even more distorted than those of the other three. The Madonna, Maiden and Martyr mythologies are produced, at least, within the context of European culture, while the exotic Fatal Woman is, in Barthesian terms, the "Other",[3] ultimately unknowable in her foreignness. To adapt Edward Saïd's insights on the Westerner's ability to know the "Oriental", the author's perception of the exotic Fatal Woman has less to do with the real woman perceived than it does with the writer's world,[4] his cultural actuality. If the Orient has been constructed as the West's "contrasting image, idea, personality, experience",[5] arguably the myth of the exotic and sensuous Fatal Woman has been created as the contrasting image of the familiar and chaste Madonna, Maiden, and Martyr.

Three philosophical tenets held commonly by Gide and Lawrence, however, seem to lessen the inevitable cultural distortion to some degree. First, despite their own countries' "historical facts of domination"[6] over the Fatal Woman's "primitive" cultures, both authors' look to learn from what they see as superior cultures, rather than to enlighten a backward people. Gide found in Africa, even more than in his "Southern" Provence, a cure for the Northern "discordant dualism" of body and spirit. Lawrence found in Italy a people whose belief in the "blood, the flesh", counterbalanced the repressive spiritual Christianity of the North.[7]

Secondly, the Fatal Woman's South, whether it be the Orient, Italy, or Africa, serves in Lawrence's and Gide's fiction the same function it had served in their own lives--not so much as a discovery of the "Other", but as a re-discovery of a culturally-repressed larger "self". In *Sea and*

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[3]*Mythologies*, 239. See Introduction, 22.
[4]Saïd, 12. See Introduction, 22.
[5]Ibid., 1.
[6]Ibid.
[7]*Letters*, I, 500-2.

Sardinia, Lawrence says "to *penetrate* into Italy is like a most fascinating act of self-discovery --back, back, down the old ways of time".[8] Similarly, in Africa Michel finds his "authentic self" buried under the burdens of acquired Northern knowledge. After an imagined sojourn in Italy, Ursula comes closer to the harmony of body and spirit threatened by Skrebensky's sterile and mechanical North. Just as Michel likens his real "self" to the original palimpsest emerging from beneath the specious manuscripts of Northern cultural influences (*L'Immoraliste,* 61), Ursula sees herself as the authentic "kernel" discarding the husk of cultural influence that had enclosed her.

> She was the naked, clear kernel thrusting forth the clear, powerful shoot, and the world was a bygone winter, discarded, her mother and father and Anton, and college and all her friends, all cast off like a year that has gone by, whilst the kernel was free and naked and striving to take new root, to create a new knowledge of Eternity in the flux of Time. And the kernel was the only reality: the rest was cast off into oblivion (456.)

Finally, the third authorial attitude lessening the distortion of the Fatal Woman's image is, as implied above, Lawrence's and Gide's subversion of the accepted cultural mythology surrounding her. she is not the Victorian *femme fatale* whose sexuality corrupts the social order in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King;*[9] instead she is the guide to a fuller self, her sexuality suggesting the corruptive influence of the chaste Maiden's code of renunciation. To the sufficiently strong and sensitive, the Fatal Woman offers resurrection rather than death, freedom rather than confinement. She offers to her Knight a guilt-free baptism in the sensuous; to the Maiden a release from the confinement of passivity, suffering, and renunciation, the chance to embark on her own quest for a fuller knowledge of her "self".

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[8] *Sea and Sardinia,* 307.

[9] See Patricia Stubbs, *Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), 10.

Chapter Seven: The Créole

Jusqu'à present j'avais acceptĕ la morale du Christ, ou du moins certain puritanisme que l'on m'avait enseigné comme étant la morale du Christ. Pour m'efforcer de m'y soumettre, je n'avais obtenu qu'un profond désarroi de tout mon être. Je n'acceptais point de vivre sans règles, et les revendications de ma chair ne savaient se passer de l'assentiment de mon esprit. . . . Mais j'en vins alors à douter si Dieu même exigeait de telles contraintes; s'il n'était pas impie de regimber sans cesse, et si ce n'était pas contre Lui; si, dans cette lutte où je me divisais, je devais raisonnablement donner tort à l'autre. J'entrevis enfin que ce dualisme discordant pourrait peut-être bien se résoudre en une harmonie.[1]

--Gide on the eve of his first trip to Algeria

Au pays parfumé que le soleil caresse,
J'ai connu, sous un dais d'arbres tout empourprés
Et de palmiers d'où pleut sur les yeux la paresse
Une dame créole aux charmes ignorés.

--"A une dame créole", Baudelaire [2]

1. La Grande Créole

Roddey Reid, who identifies Lucile as "a disturbing replica of the creole lady, the Baudelarian avatar of what Christopher Miller calls Africanist discourse",[3] worries that Alissa's mother continues to be "ignored" by the novel's narrators and critics alike: "She has an unusual narrative existence; for though seemingly a major cause of the failure of Jérôme and Alissa's courtship, once she has left husband and family the novel assigns her to oblivion, an oblivion that the critics have faithfully

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[1] *Si le grain,* 285.
[2] *Fleurs,* LXI.
[3] Reid, 160, cites Miller's, *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1985.

respected".[4] A distinction should be made here, however, between the novel's (Gide's) and the narrators' (Jérôme's and Alissa's) handling of this Fatal Woman. Since Lucile threatens Jérôme's sexual security and Alissa's perceived need to renounce her inherited sensuality, the only ones who could rescue the *créole* from oblivion, have every reason to keep her hidden. Continuing the "Africanist discourse"--what will be referred to here as the Orientalist discourse--at the heart of the "twin" récit, *L'Immoraliste*, Gide exploits its motifs, images, gestures, and language to keep Lucile very much alive throughout *La Porte étroite*, allowing him to come between his narrators and his readers. Admittedly, Gide's is an ambivalent sympathy, but by tying Lucile thematically to the sensuous South and Alissa's discovery there of her other "religious" nature, he suggests that this Fatal Woman's wider path leads to life rather than death; that by embracing rather than avoiding the Lucile within her, Alissa might have resolved into "harmony" the "discordant dualism" Gide hoped to remedy in Algeria.

Edward Saïd, in his endlessly helpful *Orientalism*, a study of the Anglo-French experience of the Arabs and Islam, both delineates further the Oriental *femme fatale* included among the other "Belles Dames Sans Merci" in Praz, and provides the larger generalisations about the "Orientalist discourse" from which the "Africanist discourse" is derived. While one sees how Saïd might have devoted a chapter to the twentieth-century continuation of European Orientalism--"one thinks of", Saïd notes, "Gide, Conrad, Maugham, and dozens of others"[5]--so much of what he says about Flaubert, Nerval *et al.* readily applies to their literary descendants. The very argument proposed in this chapter derives from one of Saïd's central theses: "The Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West",[6] an idea which "has less to do with the Orient than it does with 'our' world".[7] Gide, as he admits above, went to Africa because he saw in this "tradition" shaped by his literary predecessors a promised cure for the "discordant duality" inculcated in him by "our world", the Occident. "The Orient", Saïd

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[4]"Oblivion" seems an overstatement even on a literal level, since the Alissa-narrator recalls her mother in the critical "canapé" incident, 165.

[5]Saïd, 190.

[6]Ibid., 5

[7]Ibid., 12.

explains, "has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality , experience";[8] Gide looks to indulge those contrasts--abandon as opposed to restraint, sensuality as opposed to spirituality--so that he might arrive eventually at a harmony between body and soul that, ironically, would be typical of neither the Occident nor the Orient. And just as he looked to Africa for the curative contrast he needed, he creates Lucile as the contrasting image to set against the one to which Alissa believes she must conform.

Saïd's relative encomiums for Nerval and Flaubert,[9] who "had greater personal and aesthetic uses for their visits to the Orient than any other nineteenth-century travellers",[10] apply (if less conspicuously) to Gide. "Both were thoroughly steeped in aspects of European culture that encouraged a sympathetic, if perverse, vision of the Orient", members of a community fascinated by "the imagery of exotic places, the cultivation of sadomasochistic tastes, . . . with the macabre, with the notion of a Fatal Woman". This is the Gide who, speaking of the "Oulad Naïl" prostitutes he portrays in *L'Immoraliste,* exclaims, "Je ne puis mieux comparer l'exotisme qu'à la reine de Saba qui vint auprès de Salomon 'pour lui proposer des énigmes.' Rien à faire à cela. . . . L'étrange me sollicite, autant que me rebute le coutumier";[11] the young Gide, who attempts to exorcise his sadomasochistic sexual tendencies in Michel's "destruction" of Marceline: in addition to the "profusion of colours" which he will come to associate with Africa (and Lucile), and "shrill sweet sounds" (he has just compared the overheard "lamentations" of his maid's homosexual tryst to the ululations "des pleureuses arabes"),[12] Gide lists as a source of sexual excitement, "l'idée de saccage, sous forme d'un jouet aimé que je détériorais".[13] In light of this tendency to clothe his "perverse" desires in African discourse, it seems hardly surprising that,

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[8]Saïd, 1.

[9]Gide's autobiographical writings ignore Nerval, though one might infer from his criticisms of Gautier and Chateaubriand that there would be little sympathy here. Flaubert, on the other hand, occupies a place of considerable esteem. See, for example, Gide's "Préface aux *Fleurs du mal*", *OC,* VII, 49-54.

[10]Saïd, 182.

[11]*Si le grain,* 304-5.

[12]Ibid., 58. Gide does not make the connection between the two shrill sounds, though I assume he hopes the reader will.

[13]Ibid., 60.

as is true with Nerval and Flaubert, "such female figures as Cleopatra, Salome, and Isis have a special significance".[14]

What is true of these writers' conception of the Oriental Fatal Woman is true of their entire pilgrimage: Gide, like Nerval and Flaubert, "brought to the Orient a personal mythology whose concerns and even structure required the Orient";[15] for all three "the Oriental pilgrimage was a quest for something personal". Their models of the Oriental woman, then, reveal more about themselves and their needs than they do about "real" Oriental femininity. Just as Flaubert's "situation of strength ['foreign, comparatively wealthy, male'] in relation to Kucheeuk Hanem, his African lover, allowed him to speak for her and tell his readers in what way she was typically oriental",[16] Gide's similar "historical facts of domination" allow him to appropriate Mériem, the Oubad Naïl lover he shares with Paul Laurens, for his personal and literary designs.

Perhaps because Gide's interest lies more in Fatal Young Men than in Fatal Women, his portrait of Mériem relies as much on the language and gestures provided by Flaubert and other literary predecessors, as does Jérôme's plagiaristic portrait of Lucile. In the candid pages of his *Journal* and *Si le grain ne meurt*, Gide applies to young African men the language from the Oriental Woman discourse. "Ils portaient . . . une petite touffe de fleurs blanches, de jasmins odorant, qui les grise; elle revient contre la joue comme une boucle de cheveux romantique et donne à leur visage l'expression d'une langueur voluptueuse".[17] Gide assigns to his first Arab male lover the antithesis of that voluptuous languor--the writers of Romance give no more middle ground to the Oriental fatal Woman than they do to the Maiden--"son corps" "brûlant" once abandoned to sexual activity.[18] Flaubert "is entranced by the

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[14]Saïd, 182.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid., 6.

[17]*Journal*, Tunis, February-March 1896, 70. Compare Prosper Mérimée's Carmen, whose adherence to the "loi d'Egypte" marks this "bohémienne" as an Oriental Fatal Woman:"Elle avait dans les cheveux un gros bouquet de jasmin, dont les pétales exhalent le soir une odeur enivrante"; "[Elle] avait une expression à la fois voluptueuse et farouche", *Carmen*(Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1973), 120,122.

[18]*Si le grain*, 299.

[Oriental woman's] self-sufficiency, by her emotional carelessness",[19] just as Gide is taken by the sixteen-year-old Mériem's "cynisme" and "sauvagerie".[20] And it is Mériem's unlikely mélange of naïveté and cynicism that recalls Flaubert's Salomé in "Hérodias", pronouncing with 'un air enfantin" her terrible request: "'Je veux que tu me donnes dans un plat, la tête...' Elle avait oublié le nom, mais reprit en souriant: 'La tête de Iaokanann!'"[21] Mériem, too, satisfying to various degrees the passions of Laurens, Gide and, eventually, Pierre Louÿs,[22] fulfils Flaubert's conception of the Oriental woman as "a disturbing symbol of fecundity, [with] her luxuriant and seemingly unbounded sexuality".[23] Like the usually "indolente" Salomé, whose contrapuntal rhythmic dancing reminds Flaubert's narrator of "les bacchantes de Lydie",[24] Mériem reminds Gide of a similar icon, "quelque bacchante, celle du vase de Gaète".[25] Gide, determined that Oriental sensuousness be religious, likens the "sumptuously" dressed Oulad Naïl prostitutes to "idols in their niches", as they sit "immobiles" along what is called "les rues Saintes" ("Par antiphrase? Je ne crois pas").[26] Flaubert creates in Salammbô the incarnation of Tanit, at once adept and sensuous, an Oriental response to the Occidental division of body and spirit.[27]

The final, and perhaps the most important, element of the Oriental Woman pattern Gide seems to inherit is what Saïd calls the "verbally inexpressive femininity" of Flaubert's models.[28] As if all that could be known of her interior life could be inferred externally, Flaubert's Oriental Woman "never spoke of herself, she never presented her emotions, presence or history".[29] During more than a dozen pages in

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[19]Saïd, 187.

[20]*Si le grain,* 314.

[21]Gustave Flaubert, "Hérodias", *Trois contes* (Paris: Librairie Générale [Livre de poche], 1983),142.

[22]*Si le grain,* 316: Louÿs "se persuada qu'il devait à notre amitié de faire de Mériem sa maîtresse".

[23]Saïd, 187.

[24]"Hérodias", 141.

[25]*Si le grain,* 307.

[26]Ibid., 304.

[27]Perhaps this passionate yet rigourously ascetic Carthaginian is the Oriental *femme fatale* that best encompasses the spiritual and sensual range suggested in Alissa.

[28]Saïd, 187.

[29]Ibid., 6. Even Salammbô is probed little psychologically in the novel that bears her name, a contrast all the more striking when considering the exteriority of her portrait (1862) with the interiority of Emma Bovary's (1857).

Gide's memoirs, Mériem "escapes" from her Oulad Naïl sisters, signals her presence "comme d'une aile contre la vitre", poses in a manner to provide Gide with "le plus frémissant souvenir", gives herself alternately in Gide's and Laurens's beds, dances voluptuously, cures Gide physically and spiritually with her "volupté", allows herself to be carried off by Louÿs to serve as his muse for his *Chansons de Bilitis;* yet at the same time that Gide records to have never felt so much pleasure in talking as he does in his "intarissables causeries" with Laurens,[30] Gide imposes on Mériem a near total silence, one conferred on her fictional descendants, Moktir's mistress and Ali's Oulad-Naïl sister in *L'Immoraliste,* and Lucile in *La Porte étroite.*

Gide, of course, is not the first French author paradoxically to advance the frontiers of French literature while freezing the icon of the Oriental Woman. The ever-increasing interest in psychological interiority in moving from Romanticism to Flaubert and then to Gide seems to have neglected her psychological complexity altogether. As Saïd argues, "Nerval's voyage (*Le Voyage en Orient*) "was by way of Lamartine's (*Voyage en Orient*], and the latter by way of Chateaubriand (*Itinéraire*)".[31] Flaubert (*Salammbô, Hérodias*) proceeds from the Romantics, and Gide and his friends, Wilde (*Salomé*) and Louÿs (*Chansons de Bilitis*), sat at the feet of Flaubert. Consequently what Saïd holds to be true for all of Orientalism seems to apply particularly to the Oriental woman: She "is premised on exteriority", frozen in literary time by a predictable code of Western-fashioned ideas and attitudes which, given her "silence", are predicated upon self-serving inferences from her physical traits and imagery.

The Ideas, with no-one to dispute them, arrange themselves in largely unexplained paradoxes. The Oriental woman is "splendide"[32], "majestueuse", yet "sauvage", "farouche". She has an "air enfantin", is "nubile" (which has taken on a more sensual nuance than the more innocuous "mariable"), yet "cynique"", "ennuyeuse". She is "languissante", "insouciante", "nonchalonte", yet "brûlante", "ardente",

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[30]*Si le grain,* 313.

[31]Saïd, 176.

[32]The language and images are all taken from works in the French tradition discussed above.

"passionnée". She is "mystique", "mystérieuse", yet "charnue", "voluptueuse". The males--mostly military and religious heroes--perceive her **Attitude** toward them to be equally antinomic. She is"séduisante", "enchanteresse", yet "dédaigneuse", "indifférente", "insouciante". She can be "fière", "féroce", or "indomptable" one moment, "suppliante" or "soumise" the next. She is, like all Fatal Women, "corruptrice", "destructrice", yet "fertile", "feconde", the initiator into sensual life.

All these self-serving suppositions are read from her **Physical traits**: skin either "brune" or "trés pâle"; figure either "svelte", or "pleine", "la chair" ("bien parfumée") at once "souple" and "ferme". Neck, arms, and shoulders are "superbes et toujours demi-nues"; the breasts, "pendantes" and "pleines", are set-off enticingly by hanging necklaces and occasional drops of moisture. The hair, "abondante", "nègre" and "crêpelée", that for Baudelaire characterizes "la langoureuse Asie et la brûlante Afrique",[33] is piled high as a tower, falling upon but still exposing the erogenous "nuque". The mouth is moist and enticingly "demi-ouverte", the lips "un peu fortes", and "rouges comme une grenade". All these traits, together with the eyes, green or black in colour and "oblique" in form, combine to offer "regards" at once defiant and inviting.

The Oriental woman fills the senses, her **imagery** a "sumptuous" synesthesia in which smell and taste conjure touch. Her perfumes give off a dense "vapeur narcotique" of either exotic fruits--whose "pulpe" "délicate et juteuse", invite comparisons with her own "volupté"--or from flowers equally "énivrantes". But it is the kinetic that best characterizes her, the tension between her sensual inertia and the transitionless move to the frenetic and rhythmic activity of her dance. A lascivious feline, she lies "immobile", "langoureuse", "indolente", "couchée sur le divan", "allongée sur son grand lit", "languissamment étendue sur une chaise longue". A bacchante, an ecstatic priestess, she gyrates "le corps tout entier secoué du battement rythmique des pieds nus"[34]; elle "se renverse de tous les côtés, pareille à une fleur que le

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[33]*Fleurs*, XXIII, "La Chevelure".
[34]*Si le grain*, 307.

tempête agite. . . . De ses bras, de ses pieds, de ses vêtements jaillissent d'invisibles étincelles qui enflamment les hommes".[35]

There is no need to argue here for a separate "Créole" discourse, especially given Gide's thematic designs in *La Porte étroite*. Rather than divide, he hopes to blend harmoniously, purposely confusing in a common pantheism images and motifs from Biskra, Aigues-Vives, and the Caribbean as a counterbalance to the puritanic bourgeois world of Normandy. To be sure, there are some subtle distinctions between the Salomés and the Créoles in, say, the work of Gauguin or the *Fleurs du mal* so much admired by Gide.[36] The indolence is redoubled, and her inferred invitation is more often to a Paradise Lost rather than to a night in hell, but the Créole as frequently remains the noble but dangerous "belle dame sans merci".

> Son teint est pâle et chaud; la brune enchanteresse
> A dans le cou des airs noblement maniérés;
> Grande et svelte en marchant comme une chasseresse,
> Son sourire est tranquille et ses yeux assurés.[37]

In Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris*, indolence is traded for ferocity, and the Creole becomes indistinguishable from the African siren: his "grande créole, à la fois svelte et charnue, vigoureuse et souple comme une panthère, était le type incarné de la sensualité brûlante qui ne s'allume qu'aux feux de tropiques".[38] Certainly Lucile fulfils all of Gide's thematic needs, inciting the moral condescension of French bourgeois society, the frequent hypocrisy of its Christianity, Jérôme's and Alissa's destructive fears.

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[35]*Hérodias*, 141.

[36]In his "Préface aux *Fleurs du mal*", Gide claims to find in Baudelaire's work the same "reflet dans la dualité de ce coeur" that he hopes to provide in his own twin *récits* (*OC*, VII, 53).

[37]*Fleurs du mal*, LXI--"A une dame créole".

[38]Eugène Sue, *Les Mystères de Paris* (Paris: Editions Albin Michel/Hallier, 1981), III, 271. Quoted in Praz, 197

Lucile flees Fongueusemare so early in the *récit* that one needs to listen carefully to hear Jérôme's admiration which, mixed with terror, composes the ambivalence typical of the Fatal Woman's "victims". Jérôme's first attempt to portray Lucile follows his tacit defence of his aunt's "white" mourning clothes--"Il m'est, à vrai dire, aussi impossible d'imaginer ma tante Bucolin en noir que ma mère en robe claire" (15)--and continues subtly to chronicle the rift between mother and son.

> Je ne voyais ma tante que durant les mois de vacances et sans doute la chaleur de l'été motivait ces corsages légers es largement ouverts que je lui ai toujours connus; mais, plus encore que l'ardent couleur des écharpes que ma tante jetait sur ses épaules nues, ce décolletage scandalisait ma mère. (15-6)

How fitting that Jérôme predicates his defence on the "heat" whose "ardent flame" restored Michel and Gide to life in Algeria,[39] whose "éblouissant feux"[40] are all Lucile has at Fongueusemare to recall her West Indian home[41]; on the "ardent" colours that sexually excited him in his youth and became associated later with Gauguin's painting.[42] Gide's colour motifs imply that Jérôme could no more imagine Lucile in the sterility of fall or winter than he could in the black of "deuil", the mood he demands of Alissa. Jérôme does remember one splendid summer with Alissa, but even then it is in the company of Juliette, who first gives birth in June and in the fertile South, that he descends to the garden (45, 47). To Alissa he assigns instead the purple Passion of Easter[43] or the mournful romantic tenor of Baudelaire's "froides ténèbres" (47) of fall,[44] the season of the "triste visite" after his military service and of Alissa's tragic death. Jérôme finds the suggestively "ardent" heat and attendant colour to be attractive when Juliette

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[39]"L'air était presque vif, mais le soleil ardent. J'offris tout mon corps à sa flamme" (*L'Immoraliste*, 65).

[40]*Fleurs*, XXII, "Parfum exotique".

[41]*Fleurs*, "O femme dangereuse, ô séduisants climats!" L, "Ciel brouillé".

[42]*Si le grain*, 244: "[Les etoiles] aux tons si vifs, si particuliers, si joyeux."

[43]It is during "Pâques" (23) that Jérôme offers his life to Alissa, that "petite âme palpitante, during "Pâques" that Alissa places "holiness" above human happiness (124). Similarly, Miriam and Paul find Easter to be more concerned with suffering than with resurrection (see chapter V).

[44]When Jérôme reluctantly quotes the opening line of "Chant d'automne" to Juliette, her response with the second line further identifies her with summer and light: "*Adieu, vive clarté de nos étés trop courts!*" (48).

confronts him during the Christmas party: "Elle avait le visage en feu . . . ses yeux luisaient comme si elle eût eu la fièvre. . . . Une sorte de fureur l'exaltait; malgré mon inquiétude, je fus étonné, presque gêné par sa beauté" (80). There is no unconscious Orientalist discourse, however, when the heat chases the blood to Alissa's visage during their walk at Orcher: "Alissa était déplaisamment colorée" (117).

The tactile opposition between the energy of Lucile's radiant heat and the restrictive coldness of Fongueusemare finds its spatial complement in the novel's title. Lucile's "chemin spacieux"(28) and "corsages . . . largement ouverts" threaten the restrictive "porte étroite" and "voie resserrée" of her stepfather's puritanism. Lucile's natural openness of naked shoulders and "décolletage" lightly ascends, while the "gravité" (32, 47) Jérôme sees in Alissa falls heavily to earth. The tension between natural exuberance and the unnatural puritan restraint that quashed the first "élans" of Jérôme's heat (30) escalates from suggestion to confrontation as he continues with Lucile's portrait.

> Lucile Bucolin était très belle. Un petit portrait d'elle que j'ai gardé me la montre telle qu'elle était alors, l'air si jeune qu'on l'eût prise pour la soeur aînée de ses filles, assise de côté, dans cette pose qui lui était coutumière: la tête inclinée sur la main gauche au petit doigt mièvrement replié vers la lèvre. Une résille à grosses mailles retient la masse de ses cheveux crépelés à demi croulés sur la nuque; dans l'échancrure du corsage pend, à un lâche collier de velours noir, un médaillon de mosaïque italienne. La ceinture de velours noirs au large noeud flottant, le chapeau de paille souple à grands bords qu'au dossier de la chaise elle a suspendu par la bride, tout ajoute à son air enfantin. La main droite, tombante, tient un livre fermé. (16)

Potential symbols of restraint, the collar, net, sash, and hat suggest Le Havre's feckless attempts to contain this primitive Creole from Martinique: the sash's knot "floats" toward denouement; the "lâche" collar hangs loosely, the net cannot keep the curls of the frizzy hair--"Tes cheveux crespelés" (Baudelaire)[45]--from falling over the neck; the hat,

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[45]Reid, 160, makes a similar point, but does not tie the allusion to the Baudelaire motif that runs throughout *La Porte étroite*, nowhere more strongly than in the descriptions of Lucile.

"supple" and natural, has already been doffed. Her aspect is "jeune", "enfantin"; all that falls here is the closed book, a symbolic rejection of Jérôme's and Alissa's ponderous bookishness.

Counterpoint to the paradoxical "air enfantin" is the discourse's customary pose of the recumbent tigress. Alissa's second journal entry associates the posture with an attractive southern fertility: the pregnant Juliette "sommeille sur une chaise longue" in the "Italian" gallery of her Aigues-Vives home (159). When she catches herself in the same pose a year later, however--"Je m'étais étendue sur ce canapé où papa trouvait que je ressemblais à ma mère" (165)--Alissa fears in herself the destructive sterility of Romance's Fatal Woman; the next morning, as mentioned above, Alissa fears her heart is "lâche", a code word to suggest simultaneously the languor and lack of moral vigour indirectly associated with Lucile.[46]

The Italian mosaic medallion, like the recumbent pose and the "air enfantin", signals further the maternal resemblance that Jérôme does not (will not?) recognise until much later. When he espies Alissa at the Christmas party, Jérôme recalls, "elle portait au cou, dans l'échancrure de son corsage clair, une ancienne petit croix d'améthyste que je lui avais donné en souvenir de ma mère" (78). Ironically framing the symbol of Jérôme's mother and her ancient tradition of Christian mortification are allusions to Alissa's mother and her equally ancient rituals of sensuousness. The "corsage clair" recalls Lucile's "robe claire", which Mrs Palissier found offensive, as well as her "corsages légers" (15); the "échancrure", Jérôme's first reference to his cousin's corporeal existence, recalls both the "décolletage" that so scandalised Jérôme's mother and the "échancrure" in which hangs Lucile's medallion. Lucile's locket, of Italian mosaic, is the emblem of the pagan Mediterranean culture that ties her to both her daughters: to Juliette through her "Italian" gallery, and to Alissa through the "Italian" oaks in her pagan southern forest (160). Mrs Palissier's cross seems even more incongruous alongside these reminders of Lucile when one considers the necklace Alissa wore

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[46]Gide, perhaps following Baudelaire's lead in *Fleurs du mal*, interpolates alternate meanings by having Jérôme unwittingly suggest Lucile in describing her clothes and setting. She, like her collar, hat, and knot, is "lâche", "souple", and "flottante", all part of the Oriental Woman discourse.

before Jérôme gave her his telling present. Bursting into her room on the last night of that "splendid summer", Jérôme sees Alissa attempting to affix an ornament that identifies her as the Creole's daughter, "un collier de corail" (53).

As Jérôme builds to the seduction scene, he redoubles both the Orientalist discourse and his ambivalence, "un sentiment fait de trouble, d'une sorte d'admiration et d'effroi" (18), which echoes "the sentiment of mixed adoration and terror" Praz assigns to Cleopatra's lovers[47].

> Lucile Bucolin ne prenait que peu de part à notre vie; elle ne descendait de sa chambre que passé le repas de midi; elle s'allongeait aussitôt sur un sofa ou dans un hamac, demeurait étendue jusqu'au soir et ne se relevait que languissante. Elle portait parfois à son front, pourtant parfaitement mat, un mouchoir comme pour essuyer une moiteur; c'était un mouchoir dont m'émerveillaient la finesse et l'odeur qui semblait moins un parfum de fleur que de fruit; parfois elle tirait de sa ceinture un minuscule miroir à glissant couvercle d'argent, qui pendait à sa chaîne de montre avec divers objets; elle se regardait, d'un doigt touchait sa lèvre, cueillait un peu de salive et s'en mouillait le coin des yeux. Souvent elle tenait un livre, mais un livre presque toujours fermé; dans le livre, une liseuse d'écaille restait prise entre les feuillets. Lorsqu'on approchait d'elle, son regard ne se détournait pas de sa rêverie pour vous voir. Souvent, de sa main ou négligente ou fatiguée, de l'appui du sofa, d'un repli de sa jupe, le mouchoir tombait à terre, ou le livre, ou quelque fleur, ou le signet. Un jour, ramassant le livre--c'est un souvenir d'enfant que je vous dis--en voyant que c'étaient des vers, je rougis.
>
> Le soir, après dîner, Lucile Bucolin, ne s'approchait pas à notre table de famille, mais, assise au piano, jouait avec complaisance de lentes mazurkas de Chopin; parfois rompant la mesure, elle s'immobilisait sur un accord...
> (17-8)

Jérôme, who knows Normandy society sufficiently to imagine the sort of reception they would have offered to the young Creole "si séduisante" (17), seems to present an apologia for her eventual "flight". Through the code's emphasis on "indolence", he suggests the caged animal's potentially dangerous malaise or, as Levy suggests, "une perversité

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[47]Praz, 219.

nourrie peut-être de sa 'nature,' peut-être de sa 'situation': plante des tropiques, jolie et un peu vénéneuse, transplantée de force dans un terreau étranger, stérilisant par son conformisme et qui finit par le rejeter".[48] Gide, through the natural emblems of Lucile's island home ("hamac", "corail"), possibly identifies her with the tortoiseshell bookmarker caught between the leaves of the romantic code, specifically the Orientalist discourse that would have identified her as a corruptive influence on the Vautiers' other children. The colloquial redundance of "rester prise" emphasises the enforced stasis, just as "languissante" reinforces the nostalgic dreaming for her tropical home.

Lucile's watch chain suggests perhaps her precarious position in this French bourgeois milieu, bound to an artificial temporal order which opposes the "southern" abandon to the present moment. She refuses on one hand to adhere to the Bucolin schedule or to adopt their values; yet, as Levy has argued, she accepts the bourgeois alternative to its own status quo, the code of Romance. Gide's double-edged irony suggests that Lucile, condemned by one cultural mythology to be the Oriental seductress, chooses to fulfil the pattern of the Occidental courtesan: the affected poses, the precious mirror (that both prefigures the mirror in which Alissa attached her coral collar and opposes the figurative platonic reflection Jérôme hopes to see in Alissa's soul), the ostensible sensitivity to poetry and music, the stylized gestures of seduction.[49] The tension between her original and present worlds manifests itself in her every gesture: the artificial fineness of the handkerchief and its predictable use as an object of coquetry set against its naturally seductive "parfum exotique" "des fruits savoureux"(Baudelaire);[50] the stylized Mazurkas of Chopin (whose music Mme Gide mère deemed "malsaine")[51] set against the spontaneous emotion with which she plays them (The way Lucile lingers over a chord, savouring its texture, serves as a correlative for the narrative 'pause' as Jérôme the narrator lingers over her portrait.).

As the unconscious admiration of Lucile couched in Jérôme's language all but disappears, Gide expresses his sympathy for the Creole

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[48]Levy, 22.
[49]Levy, 19.
[50]*Fleurs*, XXII, "Parfum exotique".
[51]*Si le grain*, 168.

by ascribing to her the vocabulary of "southern" abandon. Jérôme's wonder at the exotic fragrance of Lucile's handkerchief and the pure perfection of her skin gives way to anger as he recounts her attempt to "seduce" him. The story begins with Lucile in her signature season (summer), Jérôme in his signature gesture (seeking a book).

> Un jour de cet été . . . j'entre au salon chercher un livre; elle y était. J'allais me retirer aussitôt; elle qui, d'ordinaire, semble à peine me voir, m'appelle:
>
> "Pourquoi t'en vas-tu si vite? Jérôme! est-ce que je te fais peur?
>
> Le coeur battant, je m'approche d'elle; je prends sur moi de lui sourire et de lui tendre la main. Elle garde ma main dans l'une des siennes et de l'autre caresse ma joue.
>
> "Comme ta mère t'habille mal, mon pauvre petit!..."
>
> Je portais alors une sorte de vareuse à grand col, que ma tante commence de chiffonner.
>
> "Les cols marins se portent beaucoup plus ouverts! dit-elle en faisant sauter un bouton de chemise.--Tiens! regarde si tu n'es pas mieux ainsi!" et, sortant son petit miroir, elle attire contre le sien mon visage, passe autour de mon cou son bras nu, descend sa main dans ma chemise entrouverte, demande en riant si je suis chatouilleux, pousse plus avant... J'eus un sursaut si brusque que ma vareuse se déchira; le visage en feu, et tandis qu'elle s'écriait:
>
> "Fi! le grand sot!" je m'enfuis; je courus jusqu'au fond du jardin; là dans un petit citerneau du potager, je trempai mon mouchoir, l'appliquai sur mon front, lavai, frottai mes joues, mon cou, tout ce que cette femme avait touché. (19-20)

Allowed to break her silence for the first time, Lucile proves herself to be more playful than cruel, the frankness of her laughter ringing out against a backdrop of humourless puritan sombreness. Pitted once more against Mme Palissier, Lucile dislikes the restrictiveness of her sense of style as much as Jérôme's mother objects to the openness of hers. Gide's drama and language tend toward the burlesque with their playful exaggeration of the tension between abandon and repression. In trying to make her nephew wear his collars "plus ouvertes", she "makes the button jump" from his shirt.[52] The language's kinetic force establishes a comical cause-and-effect relationship, Lucile moving in, Jérôme

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[52]While unsurprising in French, the phrase 'faire sauter un bouton' is more active and playful than 'defaire.'

jumping out. She both "attracts" and "draws" his face against hers, tightens her hold by "passing" her naked arm around his neck, her hand "descends" into his now half-opened shirt, "pushes" further in. Jérôme "jumps" up so violently that he "tears open" his shirt further; his face on fire, he "flees".

Jérôme's attempts to douse Lucile's characteristic heat--"le visage en feu"--and to scrub every part "that woman" had touched, manifests for the first time his refusal to confront his own sexuality, his inability to rebel against a puritan education that, like Gide's, had made "un monstre" of the flesh.[53] Michel, as an antidote to a similar puritan education, abandons himself entirely when he hears the echo of the African land in his own heart (*L'Immoraliste*, 54); when Alissa experiences a similar resonance--"mon coeur battait très fort"--in her sensual rite of passage, she is sufficiently honest to acknowledge its "religious" attraction(160); but when Jérôme approaches Lucile, "le coeur battant", he not only denies his kinship to Lucile's sensuousness, he directs Alissa to flee from hers as well.

Just as he scrubs himself in Alissa's "potager" after Lucile touches him, he runs to his cousin's room on the third floor after he witnesses Lucile's "tryst" on the second. Gide continues the same linguistic irony, with Jérôme as scandalised by Lucile's "open door" as he is attracted to "la porte étroite", the door he sees figuratively as "la porte même de la chambre d'Alissa" (28). Jérôme's furtive withdrawal--"par crainte d'être vu, j'hésite . . . me dissimule"; je me glisse sans être vu"--serves as the negative counterweight for the radiant openness of Lucile's room: "La porte est ouverte"; "un rai de lumière sort"; "ma tante elle-meme rit aux éclats"; les bougies de deux candélabres répandent une clarté joyeuse" (24-5).

None of Pascal's mystical "joie, joie, joie" replaces the human joy emanating from the second floor. Gide underlines the contrast between the natural light of Lucile's room and the "sombreness" of Alissa's with a visual parallel. Pretending to have tangled his feet in a scarf, the young lieutenant, rushing to retrieve a cigarette from the floor, "tombe à genoux devant ma tante", the playful seductive goddess lying on her

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[53] *Si le grain*, 246.

chaise longue, Robert and Juliette "à ses pieds". Once Jérôme's eyes become accustomed to the dark of Alissa's room, he descries his cousin, "au chevet de son lit, *à genoux*, tournant le dos à la croisée d'où tombe un jour mourant" (25). Assuming that the laughter rising from Lucile's room muffles his knocking, Jérôme bursts in. He seems to associate Lucile's "chaise longue" with the sensual, but apparently cannot imagine Alissa's bed to have any but the most pious connotations. The "falling", "dying" day counterposes the exuberant light on the second floor; "la croisée", amidst the other religious imagery, evokes the transept of a church as well as the window, and perhaps even the ascetic symbol of Mrs Palissier's "petit croix". To complete the ironic contrast between the two chapels, Gide has Jérôme, transported by "pity", "abnegation" and "vertu", fall at the feet of *his* goddess:"Je m'agenouille enfin plein de prière" (26).

To counter Jérôme's self-serving vision that an entirely spiritual Alissa spends most of her time in postures of abnegation, Gide has Jérôme "burst" into her room the night he had thoughtlessly "abandoned" his arm around Juliette's waist.

> La crainte de devoir partir avant de lui avoir parlé me poussa jusque dans sa chambre peu de temps avant le dîner. Elle mettait un collier de corail et pour l'attacher levait les bras et se penchait, tournant le dos à la porte et regardant par-dessus son épaule, dans un miroir entre deux flambeaux allumés. (53)

The unintentionally provocative attitude, as Defaux suggests, evokes Lucile's sensual and languorous poses,[54] the mirror and the candles recall her "miroir à glissant" and her "candélabres". Framed in this suggestive altar, the coral collar visually suggests the "Creole" in Alissa, the potential harmony with nature to be thwarted by the ancient-cross culture. As if resigned to Jérôme's patterns for her, Alissa "posa sur la cheminée le collier qu'elle ne parvenait pas à agrafer".

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[54]Defaux, 105.

2. The Old Eve

Gide suggests Alissa's affinity with her mother's sensuousness through her love for nature, both in the garden of restraint at Fongueusemare and the forest of abandon at Aigues-Vives. During her revelation in that southern forest, Alissa momentarily inhabits her mother's "home", as Gide's language melds the Provence of his youth with the Africa of his young manhood, both of these with Lucile's island home. Ironically, Gide locks Lucile in her closed-curtain salon as a conceit for the puritan suppression of natural energy. Her self-sequestration corresponds to the "terrible embarrassment" the Vautiers suffered for the manifestations of their adopted daughter's "bizarre" character and behaviour (17); her "crises" and her eventual flight--the sudden kinetic explosion from the horizontal "languissante"-- concedes to the trajectory of her natural exuberance. Jérôme's implied criticism of Le Havre's attitude toward the young Lucile suggests some understanding of her plight; his apparent failure to see why Lucile eschews the garden at Fongueusemare belies that sympathy. He simply records that Lucile stayed in the salon while he and the others took a nightly summer's stroll in the garden, apparently insensible to the cause-and-effect relationship between his mother's participation in these walks and Lucile's aloofness: "Nous retrouvions au salon ma tante qui ne sortait presque jamais avec nous" (14).

The Bucolin garden, particularly as it is perceived and remembered by Jérôme, is hardly a congenial setting for the seductive Creole. As Cancalon argues, Jérôme is incapable of separating the image of his love for Alissa from the image of the garden,[55] demanding that it remain the pre-sexual Eden of their youth. Jérôme's description, then, allows Gide to tells us more about his narrator's interior landscape and repressive formation than it does about the walled garden.

> Dans un jardin pas très grand, pas très beau, que rien de particulier ne distingue de quantité d'autres jardins normands, la maison des Bucolins, blanche, à deux étages,

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[55]Cancalon, "Techniques et personnages dans les récits d'André Gide", 71. See, too, Marie Wégimont, "Description du jardin de Fongueusemare dans *La Porte étroite*: Structure, signification et distanciation", *Nottingham French Studies* 26.2 (1987):46-57.

> ressemble à beaucoup de maisons de campagne du siècle avant-dernier. Elle ouvre une vingtaine de grandes fenêtres sur le devant du jardin, au levant; autant par-derrière; elle n'en a pas sur les côtés. Les fenêtres sont à petits carreaux; quelques-uns, récemment remplacés, paraissent trop clairs parmi les vieux qui, auprès, paraissent verts et ternis. Certains ont des défauts que nos parents appellent des "bouillons"; l'arbre qu'on regarde au travers se dégingande; le facteur, en passant devant, prend une bosse brusquement. (12-3)

The opening sentence iterates the suggestion that the novel's setting typifies that of the Norman bourgeoisie, whose perspective has changed little over the last two centuries. The view is decidedly antithetical, blind to possibilities on either side, to any idea that cannot be accommodated to their little squares of perception. They prefer the accustomed view through an antique patina to the clarity of the present moment. The squares distort nature, transform the messenger from the outside world into a menacing hunchback.

The garden's geometry extends the suggestion of right-angled moral perception, the surrounding walls that of the incestuous confinement of an enervated bourgeoisie.

> Le jardin, rectangulaire, est entouré de murs. Il forme devant la maison une pelouse assez large, ombragée, dont une allée de sable et de gravier fait le tour. De ce coté, le mur s'abaisse pour laisser voir la cour de ferme qui enveloppe le jardin et qu'une avenue de hêtres limite à la manière du pays. (13)

The garden prepares us for Lucile's emblematic scheme, well-manicured nature surrounded by the Puritan's gravel and stony path. As if by design, the Normans add to their restrictive maze by turning nature in on itself: the farm envelops the garden, the beeches limit the farm.

The back garden has escaped some of the rigour, introducing the novel's signature tension between narrow restraint and spacious ease, between Puritan renunciation and Lucile's sensual abandon, between Alissa's Christian and Pagan faces of nature.

> Derrière la maison, au couchant, le jardin se développe plus à l'aise. Une allée, riante de fleurs, devant les espaliers

> au midi, est abritée contre les vents de mer par un épais rideau de lauriers du Portugal et par quelques arbres. Une autre allée, le long du mur du nord, disparaît sous les branches. Mes cousins l'appelaient "l'allée noire", et passé le crépuscule du soir, ne s'y aventuraient pas volontiers. Ces deux allées mènent au potager, qui continue en contrebas le jardin, après qu'on a descendu quelques marches. Puis, de l'autre côté du mur que troue, au fond du potager, une petite porte à secret, ou trouve un bois taillis où l'avenue de hêtres, de droite et de gauche, aboutit. Du perron du couchant le regard, par-dessus ce bosquet retrouvant le plateau, admire le moisson qui le couvre. A l'horizon, pas très distant, l'eglise d'un petit village et, le soir, quand l'air est tranquille, les fumées de quelques maisons. (13-4)

The language and mood used to describe the spacious 'southern path', "laughing" with flowers and protected by the Portuguese laurels, prefigure the colour and southern sensuality of Lucile and Midi. Conversely, the "allée noire", the "northern" path, alongside a wall, inspiring repugnance, relates to the dark, enclosed ethos of Puritan asceticism (which all of Jérôme's cousins except Alissa reject). Gide's metaphorical landscape suggests the black path is the correlative of the "voie étroite" Jérôme associates with Alissa's room during Pastor Vautier's sermon, while the gay and colourful path is the correlative of 'le chemin spacieux' that he dreams leads to Lucile's room: "Je revoyais ma tante étendue riante; je voyais le brillant officier rire aussi"(28). Beyond, the kitchen garden's "petite porte" (recalling the "porte étroite" Jérôme imagines as the entryway to Alissa's room [28]), leads out to the world of Jérôme's fruitless pilgrimages, or back into the edenic refuge of his childhood, where he immures Alissa in his platonic abstractions. But while Jérôme assigns Alissa to the homely "potager", Gide associates her indirectly with the Portuguese laurels, whose classical associations[56] prefigure the "pagan" landscape in which she discovers her own sensuousness at Aigues-Vives.

That the laurel thrives at Fongueusemare suggests it is the cultural perspective rather than nature that speaks different languages in the

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[56]The laurel, sacred to both Apollo and Bacchus, also represents fecundity. Federico Garcia Lorca, who is concerned about the same body-spirit split as are Gide and Lawrence uses it in the bridal garlands in *Blood Wedding* and has the heroine say a laurel prayer for fecundity in *Yerma*.

North and South. On the night she writes that she feels Jérôme's presence with such "violence" at Fongueusemare, the garden, "tout embaumé", "l'air . . . tiède", speaks to Alissa in the same sensual language ("Infinis bercements du loisirs embaumé!"[57]) as it does in the South; it is only because she ascribes the garden's beauty to the Christian God--"Merci, mon Dieu, d'avoir fait cette nuit si belle!" (100)-- that she is able consciously to ignore its sensual undertones. The real irony is that Jérôme remains insensible to the South's suggestions in Italy at the same time Alissa desires him in her Norman garden.

Jérôme, typically insensitive to the suggestions of his own language, portrays Alissa as having a harmonious relationship with her garden, paints her increasingly in the image of her mother. Like Milton's Satan,[58] Jérôme attains the first images of his Eve (the mature Alissa) by eavesdropping. Able to hear but not see, he fashions a portrait consistent with the "natural beauty" and "graceful" "virtue" he has just attributed to her and denied in himself. His own furtiveness contrasts with Alissa's artlessness, his "virtue" of "restraint" with her virtue, which "semblait un abandon" (32); Gide suggests Jérôme brings a sinister force to the garden, while Jérôme suggests Alissa brings a curative one:

> Sans doute, comme elle avait accoutumé, Alissa, un léger panier au bras, enlevait les fleurs fanées et ramassait au pied des espaliers les fruit encore verts que les fréquents brouillards de mer faisaient choir. (33)

In his second description of Alissa in the garden, Jérôme unwittingly suggests further the rapprochement between Alissa and Lucile. Inspired by Abel's call for manly assertiveness, Jérôme wanders about in the garden in search of Alissa:

> Elle était au fond du verger, cueillant au pied d'un mur les premiers chrysanthèmes qui mêlaient leur parfum à celui des feuilles mortes de la hêtraie. L'air était saturé d'automne. Le soleil ne tiédissait plus qu'à peine les espaliers, mais le ciel était orientalement pur. Elle avait le visage encadré, caché presque au fond d'une grande coiffe zélandaise qu'Abel lui avait rapportée de voyage. . . . Elle ne se retourna pas d'abord à mon approche, mais un léger

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[57]*Fleurs*, XXIII, "La Chevelure".
[58]*Paradise Lost*, IV.

> tressaillement qu'elle ne put réprimer m'avertit qu'elle avait reconnu mon pas. . . .Elle, sans d'abord tourner le front vers moi, mais le gardant baissé comme fait un enfant boudeur, tendit vers moi, presque en arrière, la main qu'elle avait pleine de fleurs, semblant m'inviter à venir. (61-2)

Framing her in the "orientally pure sky", Jérôme limns Alissa with Lucile's language and gestures. The playful pouting as Alissa extends the flowery invitation evokes the paradox of the child-like seductress, Lucile with her "air enfantin", "carelessly" dropping a perfumed handkerchief or flower for Jérôme to recover (18). And for a moment Jérôme does seem to respond to the natural harmony, the perfume of the new flowers opposing that of the restrictive hedge's dead leaves, the "peasant" girl's violent sensitivity to his presence. Allowing Alissa's "abandon" to dissolve his characteristic restraint, Jérôme recalls, "m'abandonnant au parfait bonheur de l'instant", "je ne souhaitais plus rien au-delà de son sourire, et que de marcher avec elle, ainsi, dans un tiède chemin bordé de fleurs, en lui donnant la main" (63). This is the same "southern" temporal abandon Nathanaël learns at the feet of Ménalque--"Ne distingue pas Dieu du bonheur et place tout ton bonheur dans l'instant"[59]-- and that Michel associates with the discovery of his authentic self: "Souvenirs ou regrets, espérance ou désir, avenir et passé se taisaient; je ne connaissais plus de la vie que ce qu'en apportait l'instant".[60] But here there is no rebirth. "Sans aucune transition", Jérôme returns to the constraints of linear time, to future projects that will leave Alissa alone in the garden: "Je commençai à parler de mes projets, de mes études et de cette nouvelle forme de vie de laquelle je me promettais tant de profit" (63).

It is Alissa, of course, who already proves responsive to Michel and Nathanaël's discoveries. In the garden she both surrenders to the spontaneity of the present instant and, in the way that Michel recounts, reacts to the senses rather than to abstractions of thought: "Je ne pensais à rien; qu'importait la pensée? Je sentais extraordinairement".[61] Her "tressaillement" foretokens her involuntary beating of the heart at

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[59]*Les Nourritures terrestres, OC,* II, 73.

[60]*L'Immoraliste,* 71.

[61]Similarly, Nathanaël says, "Toute connaissance que n'a pas précédée une sensation m'est inutile" (*Nourritures,* 76).

Aigues-Vives, her sensuous response to the "frémissement" of Jérôme's body the night her father sees Lucile in her. Typically, Jérôme remains ignorant of the causal relationship between her response and the sensual implications of his own language, the oriental sky, the natural perfumes, the sun-warmed flower earth, the phallic energy of the "énormes tiges de concombres" sprawling through the garden frame that surrounds them: "Jamais encore je n'avais senti sa tendresse plus attentive, ni son affection plus pressante" (64).

Ménalque counsels Nathanaël, "que toute émotion sache te devenir une ivresse".[62] At Fongueusemare, Alissa is able to convince herself that her passionate "southern" response to nature is religious in character. She writes to Jérôme in Italy:

> J'ai fait avant-hier, seule à pied, une énorme promenade à travers champ, au hasard; je suis rentrée plus exaltée que lasse, tout ivre de soleil et de joie. Que les meules, sous l'ardent soleil, étaient belles! Je n'avais pas besoin de me croire en Italie pour trouver tout admirable. (102)

Gide's own "southern discourse", one which articulates equally the sensual abandon of Provence, Italy, Africa, and, here, the West Indies, belies Alissa's attempt to interpret her abandon ("au hasard"), her "joy" and "intoxication", the exaltation produced by the "ardent sun" and the "perfume" of each flower as merely a form of Christian worship. "Oui, mon ami, c'est une exhortation à la joie, comme tu dis, que j'écoute et comprends dans 'l'hymne confus' de la nature. Je l'entends dans chaque chant d'oiseau; je la respire dans le parfum de chaque fleur; et j'en viens à ne comprendre plus que l'adoration comme seule forme de la prière" (102-3). But when she hears the same confusing hymn in the forest at Aigues-Vives, the Christian allusions give way to the classical, the spiritual interpretation to the sensual. "Je songeais à Orphée, à Armide"; now she interprets "un chant d'oiseau" as the call to a sensuous nature. Her heart beats violently in response.

Gide first signals Lucile's presence in the South through Juliette, who was able to laugh along with her mother and the young lieutenant, who

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[62]*Nourritures*, 83.

so enjoys Spain, the seductive land of Carmen (98),[63] whose "maison à l'Italienne" evokes Lucile's "médaillon de mosaïque italienne".

> Juliette, sans quitter sa chaise longue, peut voir la pelouse se vallonner jusqu'à la pièce d'eau où s'ébat un peuple de canards bariolés et où naviguent deux cygnes. Un ruisseau que ne tarit, dit-on, aucun été l'alimente, puis fuit à travers le jardin qui devient bosquet toujours plus sauvage, resserré de plus en plus entre la garrigue sèche et les vignobles, et bientôt complètement étranglé. (159-60)

Assuming naturally her mother's customary pose, Juliette commands a view of the frontier between civilisation and nature, the compromise she has effected between the characters of her parents. The lawn and garden give way to an increasingly savage forest, the elegant swans share the pond with the disporting ducks; the same inexhaustible brook feeds, even in the hottest summer, civilisation's vineyards and the indifferent primitive "garrigue". It is a sign of Alissa's strength that she, as do Nathanaël and Michel, ventures beyond that border.

The bordering "garrigue", where Alissa begins to compare the fertility of Juliette's life with the sterility of her own,[64] typifies how in Gide's southern discourse essential distinctions between one place and another begin to fade. In *Si le grain ne meurt,* Gide's language implies he loved the inhuman "garrigue" passionately because it fulfilled for the child the same needs which Africa satisfied in the young man (the same needs which Lucile could fulfil in Alissa): "Je gagnai en courant la garrigue, vers où m'entraînait déjà cet étrange amour de l'inhumain, de l'aride, qui, si longtemps, me fit préferer à l'oasis le désert. Les grands souffles secs, embaumés, l'aveuglante réverbération du soleil sur la roche nue,

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[63]Praz, 197, notes, "It was Mérimée who localized in Spain the type of the Fatal Woman". Praz includes Pierre Louÿs' Conchita in the same line. Gide exploits the cultural myth in *L'Immoraliste* to account for the primitive sensuousness of the Heurtevents: "Ils semblaient de type étranger, et j'appris plus tard, en effet, que leur mère était espagnole . . .Heurtevent, un vagabond fieffé dans sa jeunesse, l'avait , paraît-il, épousée en Espagne. Il était pour cette raison assez mal vu dans le pays" (141). The circular nature of Gide's "southern discourse" manifests itself in the same paragraph, where the portrait of the youngest Heurtevent collapses any essential distinctions between Spain and Africa:"Il chantait ou plutôt gueulait une espèce de chant bizarre. . . . Je ne puis dire l'effet que ce chant produisit sur moi; car je n'en avais entendu de pareil qu'en Afrique... Le petit, exalté, paraissait ivre".

[64]She writes to Jérôme, "Je t'épargne quantité de réflexions que j'ai pu faire dans mes promenades solitaires sur 'la garrigue', où ce qui m'étonne le plus c'est de ne pas me sentir plus joyeuse; le bonheur de Juliette devrait me combler..." (109).

sont enivrants come le vin".[65] Thus, through a series of images and words, Provence becomes Africa and both evoke Lucile, in their seductive indifference to human concerns, their sensuous naked roundness, their perfumes, their merciless yet intoxicating heat.

The same linguistic cross-pollination works the other way when Gide, perhaps unconsciously, draws upon his initial response to his land of "harmony" in creating the synthesis of Alissa's experience. Compare the language of ambivalence--equal parts of attraction and fear, clarity and confusion--which he uses to describe his first glimpse of the African coast in *Si le grain ne meurt* with that in Alissa's response to the "nearly pagan" forest.

> D'immenses *éclairs* de chaleur palpitaient au loin dans la direction de l'Afrique. L'Afrique! *Je répétais ce mot mystérieux*; je le gonflais de *terreurs, d'attirantes horreurs, d'attente,* et mes regards plongeaient éperdument dans la nuit chaude vers une *promesse oppressante* et tout enveloppée d'éclairs.[66] [Emphases mine]

Even the register and rhythm enhance the verbal and emotional echoes. The Italian oaks (completing the Italian motif) shelter

> une *clairière* étroite, *mystérieuse*. . . . Je *m'étonne, m'effarouche*.... Pourtant elle était encore religieuse la sorte de *crainte* qui de plus en plus *m'oppressait. Je murmurais ces mots*: *hic nemus*.(160; emphases mine)

Gide and Alissa even recall the same allusion, introducing the "Oriental" seductress and the classical enchanters to the discursive blend with which they attempt to articulate their revelation. Both puritans are tempted by the delicious indolence of Armida's garden,[67] both are attracted to the classical pagan. Echoing Alissa's intuitive responsiveness to nature's call--"ce matin, de très bonne heure, j'ai pu faire, seule, ma première promenade de découverte" (160)-- Gide recounts,

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[65] *Si le grain,* 53.

[66] Ibid., 289-90.

[67] In Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered,* Armida, the niece of the king of Damascus, enchants the Christian Rinaldo into her garden of delights, where the crusader is overcome by indolence.

> Certain matin je risquai une promenade beacoup plus longue. . . . J'entrais dans une existence nouvelle, toute d'accueil et d'abandon. . . . Moi-même, échappé de tout poids, j'avançais à pas lents, comme Renaud dans le jardin d'Armide, frissonnant tout entier d'un étonnement, d'un éblouissement indicibles. . . . Je sentais mon coeur désoeuvré, sanglotant de reconnaissance, fondre en adoration pour un Apollon inconnu.[68]

Gide and Alissa, like Michel and Nathanaël, are equally drawn to their adventure, equally awed by their discovery, moved similarly in body and soul. But where Gide abandons himself to the Oriental seductress in Armida, the very personification of the sensuous South, Alissa suppresses her beating heart: "je suis restée un instant appuyée contre un arbre, puis suis rentrée avant que personne encore ne fût levé" (160). To abandon herself to the "sacred grove" of the South would be to abandon herself to Lucile. And since Jérôme has made all too apparent his contempt and hidden his admiration for the seductress, failed to respond to the "violence" with which Alissa felt his presence on that perfumed night at Fongueusemare, fails now to respond to her desire for Juliette's fertility--"La lettre suivante ne parlait que de la naissance de sa nièce . . . de la joie de Juliette"-- she denies the seduction of Armida's garden, the irresistible power of Orpheus's song, the invitation of the choir of nymphs.

Colette Dimic assigns Alissa to Normandy, Gide's and, in *La Porte étroite,* Jérôme's

> terre maternelle, c'est-à-dire le pays puritain aux règles contraignantes, la patrie d'une Alissa mutilant initulement la nature humaine. . . . Ce pays s'opposait à l'Afrique du Nord dont l'absence de bonté et la douceur stimulaient le classicisme naissant de Gide et réinstallaient sur le plan esthétique le goût de cette contrainte qu'il voulait bannir de son comportement éthique".[69]

Gide suggests, however, by bringing both Africa and Lucile to Alissa's "classical" grove, that she is equally at home in *her* "maternal land"; that in the "South" she learns the aesthetic restraint which manifests itself in

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[68]Ibid., 311.

[69]Colette Dimic, "L'Opposition nord/sud dans l'évolution morale et esthétique d'André Gide (de 1891 à 1911)", *André Gide 7: le romancier,* , ed. Claude Martin (Paris: Minard, 1984), 162.

the "sincerity" of her journal; that *she*, not Jérôme, would like to banish the puritan restraint from her conduct; and that it is Jérôme, in his perverse need to have Alissa maintain a virginal vigilance over the garden of his youth, who drives Alissa to "mutilate" human nature. Just before the letters in which she couches her sensual desire for Jérôme in St. Francis's language of spiritual passion, Alissa writes that she has been moved by Juliette's reports of her travels in Spain:

> Je songe à ce radieux pays dont me parle Juliette. Je songe à d'autres pays plus vastes, plus radieux encore, plus déserts. Une étrange confiance m'habite qu'un jour, je ne sais comment, ensemble, nous verrons je ne sais quel grands pays mystérieux. . . (100)

The chains of association carefully constructed in the narrative suggest that this *mysterious desert* land is Africa, "la garrigue", the South, the land of Lucile, the land where Alissa might find the harmonious solution to her "discordant dualism. They suggest with the same strength that Jérôme is incapable of accompanying her there.

Chapter Eight: Another Créole

Ursula had a new white dress of soft crape, and a white hat. She liked to wear white. With her black hair and clear, golden skin, she looked southern, or rather tropical, like a Creole.

The Rainbow **(286)**

Where there is no 'abandon' in a love, it is dangerous, I conclude; mother declares the reverse. By the way, in love, or at least in love-making, do you think the woman is always passive, like the girl in the 'Idyll'--enjoying the man's demonstration, a wee bit frit--not active? I prefer a little devil--a Carmen--I like not things passive. The girls I have known are mostly so; men always declare them so, and like them so; I do not.

Lawrence to Blanche Jennings[1]

1. Ursula the Iconoclast

Though Clara is nothing passive, Lawrence invests little of the South in this Fatal Woman. And while Lawrence's portrait of Miriam, in spite of Paul's attempts to freeze her iconically, achieves a believable roundness and complexity, that of Clara seldom steps outside the narrow confines of her type. She often appears to be created spontaneously from what Paul cannot find in Miriam or from what Miriam does not want to give to Paul. If Paul insists that Miriam is the Christian Madonna, then Clara must be the pagan "Juno dethroned"; she predictably takes on the role of the sensual *femme fatale* to satisfy the knight who assigns to Miriam the role of lily-pure Elaine; Miriam brands her as the embodiment of the "lower desires" when she insists she is the receptacle of the "higher". But even in these "patterns", Clara proves to be, as Louis Martz has suggested, "second-best and second-hand",[2] acquiescing to Paul's designs before she has dominated him sufficiently to teach him

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[1]*Letters*, I, 103.
[2]Martz, 365.

much about the "harmony" of spirit and body Lawrence was trying to work through in his fiction. "Indeed, throughout the Paul-Clara relationship", Janice Harris writes, "Lawrence indicates but does not motivate Paul's fluctuating admiration, sympathy, and contempt for her as a person and as a woman".[3]

Clara is the seemingly indomitable "Queen of Sheba" (347), the "allumeuse" who ignites the "baptism of fire in passion" (399) in which he experiences "the highest point of bliss" (408). Blood roused, "she could run like an Amazon" (290), a female warrior, clearly superior in strength and energy to the "delicate" Paul--"She played around him in triumph, sporting with her superiority, which he begrudged her" (402). But Miriam, as has been implied above, promises equally the exotic, and is closer to Alissa and Lucile's "Oriental" sensuality than is the Nordic Clara. Paul describes his first love as "full-breasted and luxuriously formed" (256); and "with her warm colouring, her gravity, her [dark] eyes dilating suddenly like an ecstasy" (175), one wonders if indeed Paul is the very type of the Fatal Woman's timorous victim--a passive youth", inferior either in condition or in physical exuberance to the woman".[4] Ultimately, even Paul implies that Miriam offers more of the harmony between body and spirit. Once "the fire [with Clara] slowly went down . . . it was not she who could keep his soul steady" (399). But Paul, as has been suggested throughout, refuses to allow Miriam to be both his spiritual anchor and sensual partner, and Miriam is herself too timorous to demand both roles.

To find the ideal female harmony of body and spirit Gide suggests in the potential fusion of Alissa and her mother, it is necessary to move ahead to Lawrence's next novel, *The Rainbow*; while Lawrence never referred to it as the "twin" to *Sons and Lovers*, he nevertheless continues to explore in his female *Bildungsroman* many of the problems left unresolved in the male, to explore, as Beebe says, "a situation that he [still] does not fully understand".[5] Taylor, for one,[6] would bring "*Sons*

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[3]Janice H. Harris, "Lawrence and the Edwardian Feminists", *The Challenge of D. H. Lawrence*, eds. Michael Squires and Keith Cushman(Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 69.

[4]Praz, 205.

[5]Beebe, 102.

and Lovers closer in spirit and conception to *The Rainbow* than students of Lawrence usually put it. Both begin with a rich, solid world, in which the quotidian and the ecstatic seem coalesced, and end with a child of that world, a self-conscious hero committed to the eventful and the new, isolated from it and seemingly doomed, but revived at the very end".[7] Ursula certainly discovers some of the answers for the conflicts Paul cannot yet resolve. Dix argues convincingly that Lawrence, in fact, leaves Paul behind to "place himself in the guise" of Ursula, just as Gide invests much of himself in Alissa: "Young women of Lawrence's day were experiencing, more than his contemporary males, the need to break out into a new way of life, to exile themselves, to break the ties of belonging".[8]

But Ursula is the "path, the direction", to borrow Dix's metaphors, for the Miriams and Claras as well as the Pauls, freeing herself from the same sorts of iconic prisons in which Romance and religion would confine them, the "patterns" which men would assign them. "Ursula is Lawrence's woman who becomes self-responsible", eventually defining herself spiritually and sexually, where both Miriam and Paul, Alissa and Jérôme, have failed. And, finally, Ursula is large enough to be "a much fuller version" of a "new woman" for which "Clara is the first sketch".[9] She manages to shatter the icons of Madonna, Maiden, and Martyr, without turning her back on spirituality--but indeed by turning her back on passivity, virginity, humility. Ursula, Lawrence's imagery suggests, *is* the rainbow, born in the soil, arching to the heavens, returning to this life.

Lawrence finds through Ursula the harmony of body and spirit that eluded Paul and Miriam. She blends Brangwen male blood intimacy with the Brangwen Woman's desire for a higher fulfilment; she somehow combines the exoticness of the Polish Lydia, the obsessive spirituality of Will and the unconscious animality of Anna to form the balance of "body and spirit" the barge owner perceives as "the perfect

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[6]See, among others, Rossman, Lawrence's Quest in *The Rainbow, D.H. Lawrence: Critical Assessments*, 3 vols., eds. David Ellis and Ornella de Zordo(Sussex: Helm Information, 1992).

[7]John R. Taylor, "The Greatness in *Sons and Lovers*," *Modern Philology* 71 (1971), 386.

[8]Dix, 34.

[9]Laurence Lerner, "Lawrence and the Feminists", Kalnins, 79.

thing" (294). To achieve her final resurrection in the epiphany of the rainbow, Ursula must peel away the cultural overlays that held both Paul and Miriam captive. Like Paul, she must leave behind the familiar but confining; like Miriam, she must shed the iconic postures of Madonna, Maiden, and Martyr, without losing that in her self which drew her to the various extremities in the first place. Ursula must, in other words, remain sufficiently protean to embrace the outer limits of the spiritual and sensual, to demand as hers all the human terrain in between. And, like Clara, she must become the Fatal Woman when the "pale" knight would impede rather than advance her own quest for self-knowledge. Her task is of epic proportion: to break free of the icons that confined Miriam and Clara in *Sons and Lovers* in order to fulfil the desires of the Brangwen "woman", who, again like Miriam, wanted access to the larger world of men. Ursula comes to consciously impose the imperatives upon herself--"She must go on and on, seeking the goal that she knew she did draw nearer to" (387)--as if she knew she had been destined to find the increased "scope and range and freedom" coveted by the first woman in the Brangwen line: "Looking out, as she must, from the front of her house towards the activity of men in the world at large . . . to see what man had done in fighting outwards towards knowledge . . . her deepest desire hung on the battle that she heard, far off, being waged on the edge of the unknown. She also wanted to know, and to be of the fighting host" (11). And when Ursula discovers Skrebensky, the male soldier incapable of the charge, she must turn *femme fatale* in order to continue the matriarchal quest.

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Lydia and Anna have already done much to free Ursula from the Virgin-Madonna's renunciation and passivity, the submissiveness to male "patterns". Before he met Lydia, Tom "dichotomised" in much the same manner as Paul: Woman was "the symbol for that further life which comprised religion and love and morality" (20), "the embodiment of all his inarticulate, powerful religious impulses" (21). He found distasteful his encounter with the prostitute, but is unable to associate his "blood intimacy" with his abstraction of a "nice girl". "Rooted in his

mother and sister", when Tom was with these "symbols" of the spiritual life, "he found that he was incapable of pushing the desired development. . . . He could not think of her like that, he could not think of her *actual* nakedness. She was a girl and he liked her, and dreaded violently even the thought of uncovering her" (21).

Perhaps because she is a "woman" rather than a girl, both a widow and a "dark" stranger, Lydia, Ursula's Polish grandmother, makes such thoughts possible for Tom. She, as Lawrence's mother was to him, and Alissa is to Jérôme, is the Marian "doorway"[10] from which the new-born Christ is issued; but this portal, unlike that of the "Virgin Mother", leads to a "new land" in which "blood" and spiritual intimacy combine harmoniously. Consistent with his fathers, who "held life between the grip of knees" (10) when they mounted their horses, Tom unconsciously associates the "Oriental" Lydia with Lawrence's symbol for instinctive and directionless sexual passion the first time he sees her: "He saw a woman approaching. But he was thinking for the moment of the horse" (29). The language framing Tom's revelation--"'That's her,' he said involuntarily"-- identifies Lydia, too, with the celestial: "He saw her face clearly, as if by a light in the air". "He went on, quiet, suspended, rarefied" (29). He soon senses "that this transfiguration burned between him and her, connecting them, like a secret power", and "submitted" "like a creature evolving to a new birth" (38). Lawrence surrounds this Madonna in images of both spiritual light and sensual darkness. After their first "infinite embrace" in the "fecund darkness", Tom feels himself "newly created, as after a gestation, a new birth, in the womb of darkness" (45). "She was the doorway to him, he to her. . . . Whilst the light flooded out from behind on to each other's faces, it was the transfiguration, the glorification, the admission"(90-1). Tom knew that "she was the gateway and the way out, that she was beyond, and that he was travelling in her through the beyond" (91). "Inside her, the subtle sense of the Great Absolute wherein she had her being was very strong. . . . She shone and gleamed to the Mystery, Whom she knew through all her senses" (97).

Particularly sensitive to every form of claustrophobia, Lydia's daughter, Anna, eventually rejects the Madonna's spirituality altogether; to resist the limitations of Will's iconic abstractions, she lapses back into

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[10]See epigraph to chapter I, "The Virgin Mother".

the entirely sensual "drowse of blood-intimacy"(10). Her father's rosary "filled her with a strange passion" when it was a sensuous "string of moonlight" "between her fingers" (97-8); but when the rosary's symbolic value shifts from the pagan to the Christian patristic, "it was not right somehow" (98). She is moved when the Madonna is the Alpha and Omega, vexed when she becomes subservient to the male: "It irritated her to say '*Dominus tecum,*' or *benedicta tu in mulieribus.*' She loved the mystic words 'Ave Maria,' Sancta Maria'; she was moved by '*benedictus fructus ventris tui Jesus,*' and by '*nunc et in hora mortis nostrae*'"(98).

Both Anna and Will desire a "dark, nameless emotion, the emotion of all the great mysteries of passion" (158); "but he would leave in abstraction what she would sanctify in flesh" (148). "His soul had great satisfaction" in the "lovely statues of women" (153) that rouse him to sexual transport with Anna when he studies their pictures: "Beautiful, the pure woman with their clear dropping gowns. Her heart became colder. What did they mean to *him?*" Anna wonders (155). They mean he would reduce her to the incarnation of these wooden statues from Bamberg cathedral, "wooden statues so shapen to his soul!" (153). After "they loved each other to transport", Anna is "radiant", Will "strange and abstracted" (155). Will would sculpt Anna into the reflection of his own image, just as he "sent the chisel over [Eve's] belly . . . at last able to create the new, sharp body of his Eve" (112). But Anna refuses to be born of man: she thinks "it is impudence to say that Woman was made out of Man's body . . . when every man is born of woman's" (152).

Will's talk of "Gothic and Renaissance and Perpendicular" initially "thrilled her"(113), but when he would reduce her, as Paul reduces Miriam "to the perpendicular lines and the Gothic arch which . . . leapt up at heaven and touched the ecstasy and lost itself in the divine", Anna will not "bow in consent" (*S&L,* 215). It is *Will's* "soul [that] leapt up" into "the perfect Womb" of the Lincoln cathedral "like seed of procreation of ecstasy" (187). Her "irritation" that Will personifies his beloved cathedral as "she" suggests Anna understands at some level his attempts to confine her within a spiritual abstraction. She resists: "she would never consent to the knitting of all the leaping stone in a great roof that closed her in . . . it was the ultimate confine" (188).

Anna refuses to be Adam's or Will's creation, to be abstracted into the "radiance" of a Gothic cathedral, in which "fecundity" folded upon "death" (188). She dances Will's nullification before a sensuous Old Testament Lord, for Lawrence, the "Flesh" nullified by the Son's "Word"[11], the unseen Creator who had chosen her" (170). She, like the Madonna, "was a door and a threshold", but a portal opening to an earthly reality. "She walked glorified, and the sound of the thrushes, of the trains in the valley of the far off, faint noises of the town were her 'Magnificat'"(166).[12] Her "storm of fecund life", unlike the cathedral's, does not fold upon death--"All the future was in her hands"(192). Scorning the role of the *Mater Dolorosa*--"It was when she came to the pictures of the Pietà that she burst out" (149)--she comes to see herself as the sensual Gaea: "She felt like the earth, the mother of everything" (193).

Ursula strikes a harmonious balance between the spirit-and-flesh duality of her parents, finally rejects the Madonna icon altogether. Having to assume responsibility for Anna's "storm of babies" as an adolescent, the word "fecundity" "became abhorrent to her. "In the heat of swelter and fecundity", Ursula "craves for some spirituality and stateliness" (246). "Inflamed in soul", the young woman "reach[es] for some unknown ideal, "irritated" that her mother limited "everything to the ring of physical considerations" (328). She remains connected to her father until he places his icons ahead of her: when he hits her across the face for having left open the door to his workshop, "the fire of mistrust and defiance burned in her" (249). And finally, Winifred Inger, telling Ursula how a friend "had died in childbirth, and what she had suffered" (315), inculcates the lessons found in Lawrence's "Patterns" essay: Men "make everything fit into an old, inert idea. . . . they don't come to one

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[11]See the original foreword to *Sons and Lovers* (Cambridge, 467-73), first printed in Aldous Huxley's *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence* in 1932: "For what was Christ? He was the Word. . . . And the Father was Flesh."

[12]Mary's principal liturgical song: "My soul doth magnify the Lord" (Luke: 1:46-55). In the context of Anna's belief that she is the creative vessel for the "unseen creator", the allusion relegates Will to the secondary position of Joseph in the Divine birth. It seems likely, too, that Lawrence is suggesting that the Lord being magnified here, unbeknownst to Anna, is Ursula, who will succeed where Skrebensky, the "Son of God", fails.

and love one, they come to an idea, and they say, 'You are my idea', so they embrace themselves" (318).

Armed with Winifred's views, her abhorrence of her mother's "animal-like" fecundity, and her loss of faith in her father, Ursula resists the Madonna icon. When Will moves from wood to clay, "he set-to to make a head of Ursula, in high relief, in the Donatello manner.[13] In his first passion, he got a beautiful suggestion of his desire" (330). Ursula remains impervious to the images of men's desires. When she first wonders if she is with Skrebensky's child, she considers momentarily sacrificing her desire for "fantastic freedom" to play the role of the humble Household Madonna: "She would marry and love her husband and fill her place simply. That was the ideal" (449). "For what had a woman but to submit? What was her flesh but for childbearing", her strength for her children and husband, the giver of life?" (450). But by the time she realises "there would be no child, she was glad. . . . She would have kept the child and herself, she would not have gone to Skrebensky" (457).

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The Brangwens live too "full and surcharged", too involved in the "exchange and interchange" of "earth and sky and beasts and green plant" (10-11) to be attracted to the Virgin-Martyrs St. Clare, or St. Catherine, the "blighters" who, according to Lawrence, "killed so much of the precious interchange in life".[14] When Tom, "in line with the infinite" (233), even in death, channels the "main flood" of his life to Lydia, she abandons "the instincts of dread" engendered by Lensky's demands that she be "passive, dark, always in shadow"(50). When she discovered that her two children had both died of diphtheria, she wanted "to enter a nunnery, to satisfy the instincts of dread in her through service of a dark religion" (49). Until she meets Tom, even the open

[13]In the Cambridge "explanatory notes,",Mark Kinkead-Weekes mentions, Donatello's "best-known female head in high relief is the gilded stone 'Annunciation'" (525). The suggestion is that Will's "desire" remains to confine Ursula, as he had hoped to do with Anna, to an abstraction, one of the statues "so shapen to his soul."

[14]*Letters*, V, 441. See epigraph to chapter V.

country and moors of Yorkshire cannot keep her from "relapsing into "the darkness of the convent, where Satan and the devils raged round the walls, and Christ was white on the cross of victory" (52).

Anna, whom Tom imbues with Brangwen blood-intimacy from her earliest visits to the Marsh--"setting her on the horse", "giving her corn for the fowls" (38), "squeezing rhythmically the teats of the placid [cows]" (69)-- finds too much "passionate joy" in her "rapture of motherhood" (198) to submit herself or her family to the Christian tradition of passive suffering that had haunted Lydia. She finds "loathsome" Will's pictures of religious paintings with "those bodies with slits in them, posing to be worshipped" (149), intuitively understanding that they call for the mimesis of Christ's Passion. She tells Will,

> "*I* don't want to see your chest slit, nor to eat your dead body, even if you offer it to me. Can't you see it's horrible?"
> "It isn't me, it's Christ".
> "What if it is, it's you! And it's horrible, you wallowing in your own dead body. . . . "And I think that Lamb in Church", she said, "is the biggest joke in the parish--" (150).

Ursula, as indomitable as her mother, eventually rejects the lamb and the dove for the lion and the eagle, because they are "proud and strong; they were themselves, they were not passive subjects . . . or sacrifices of some priest" (317). Her "eyes were like Will's", so they called her Ursula because of the picture of the saint", the martyred virgin (179). Still, she will disdain the code of the Virgin Martyr, except for the desire to be the "Bride of Christ", one who will fulfil John's promise to "become Flesh". Sunday stateliness revoked for the adolescent Ursula the "muddled domesticity" of the weekday world. A "white-robed spirit" of a personal Christ walked through her visions, in which she limited salvation to the personal: "Jesus died for *me*, He suffered for me" (255). "Ursula was with her father" in his "mystical passion" : "The shadowy Jesus with the Stigmata . . . was her own vision"; but the Christ who fell from exalted symbol to defeated humanity "repelled her". "To her Jesus was beautifully remote, shining in the distance like a white moon at sunset, a crescent moon beckoning as it follows the sun. . . . Sometimes the full moon rising blood-red upon the hill terrified her with the

knowledge that Christ was now dead, hanging heavy and dead on the cross" (256).

Indifferent to the puritan fear of sin--the Brangwens wanted from religion "the sense of the eternal and immortal, not a list of rules for everyday conduct" (255)--Ursula is not attracted to suffering; "proud" and indomitable, she will not abide a defeated Saviour. She revolts against the mimetic "doctrine of 'the other cheek'" Mrs Leivers had instilled in Miriam (*S&L*, 178), finding "there was something unclean and degrading about this humble side of Christianity" (265). Lawrence, speaking through Ursula, envisions a life-oriented Christianity in which, like Gide's, "joy" rather than "suffering" is the secret to the Gospels. She is troubled that the lilies of resurrection were "pale with a deathly scent".

> But why the memory of the wounds and the death? . . . A small thing was Resurrection, compared with the cross and the death, in this cycle. . . . For the Resurrection was shadowy and overcome by the shadow of death, the Ascension was scarce noticed, a mere confirmation of death. . . . Alas, that the memory of the passion of Sorrow and Death and the Grave holds triumph over the pale fact of Resurrection. . . .
>
> The Resurrection is to life, not to death. Shall I not see those who have risen again walk here among men perfect in body and spirit, whole and glad in the flesh, living in the flesh, loving in the flesh. . . . Is this not the period of manhood and of joy and fulfilment, after the Resurrection? . . . Can I not, then, walk this earth in gladness, being risen from sorrow? Can I not eat with my brother happily, and with joy kiss my beloved? (261-2).

Ursula, like St. Catherine and Miriam, waits to become the Bride of Christ, but the heroine of *The Rainbow* is not the least apologetic about the sensual nature of her mysticism. Genesis, her favourite biblical book, suggests the rainbow symbolically joined heaven and earth when the "Sons of Gods came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children unto them" (257). Stirred by the call, she asks, "In those days, would not the Sons of Gods have found her fair, would she not have been taken to wife by one of the Sons of God?" She "wants Jesus to love her deliciously, to take her sensuous offering, to give her sensuous response" (267). When Skrebensky comes, Ursula, as Miriam had done with Paul, confuses earthly and human lovers: assured that "here was one such as

those Sons of God who saw the daughters of men" (271), Ursula's "spirit leapt to life". But Ursula fuses her mother's sanctification of the "flesh" with her father's ecstasy of abstractions when she tells her Christ, "I don't think it's a profanity --I think it's right, to make love in a cathedral" (298).

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While impervious to the suggestions of Christian "myths", Ursula nearly succumbs to those of Romance. Seduced by the "minted superscription of romance and honour" (303), Ursula nearly forfeits her "quest for fuller self"[15] in order to play, like Miriam, the passive maiden to her Knight-Christ: To rise above the sweltering fecundity of her mother, she imagines herself "the lonely maid high up and isolated in the tower . . . waiting, waiting, always remote and high" (247). But as Rossman has argued, the Brangwen women are never the "traditional 'weaker vessels'"; so when Skrebensky proves himself to be as "pale" and passive a knight as he is a Son of God, Ursula's disillusionment strengthens her resolve to continue the quest for "a higher being".[16] Waiting no more, Ursula fulfils the deepest desires of the first Brangwen woman, "to be of the fighting host", to, like the men who moved "dominant and creative", "set out to discover what was beyond, to enlarge [her] own scope and range and freedom" (11).

Ever the paradoxical trap, Romance nearly imprisons Ursula by masquerading as her liberator, by playing on her "curious blind dignity, even a kind of nobility" (245), by offering, as does religion, an escape from workaday "reality". Where Miriam awaits a Walter Scott hero to free her from her brutish brothers, Ursula awaits a Launcelot to take her beyond the "bedlam" of Anna's fecund storm. Her "early dreams of escape from the realities of her physical and social existence", Vidas notes, "center on the visions of castles, her wishes to be a blonde heroine".[17] The "mediator" in her "triangle of desire" is Tennyson, the same

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[15]Rossman, "D. H. Lawrence and Women", 269.
[16]Ibid.
[17]Vidas, 169.

Christianised Romance that helped shape Paul's and Miriam's idealisation of women.

> Ursula was just coming to the stage when Andersen and Grimm were being left behind for *Idylls of the King* and romantic love-stories.
>
> > "Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable.
> > Elaine the Lily maid of Astolat,
> > High in her chamber in a tower to the east
> > Guarded the sacred shield of Launcelot".
>
> How she loved it! How she leaned in her bedroom window with her black, rough hair on her shoulders, and her warm face all rapt, and gazed across at the churchyard and the little church, which was a turreted castle, whence Launcelot would ride just now, would wave to her as he rode by, his scarlet cloak passing behind the dark yew-trees and between the open space. (247)

Lawrence's metaphors and structure underline how easily Ursula, as did Miriam, confuses from her bedroom window the codes of Christianity and Romance: Ursula's imagination easily transforms the church in which Will would "confine" Anna into a "turreted castle" where "she would remain the lonely maid high up and isolated"; she envisions here a scarlet-cloaked Launcelot passing behind the dark yew-trees, a "white-robed" Christ passing " between olive trees" in the subsequently described Sunday-world vision (255).

While Miriam inherits her insidious "hidden-princess" dreams exclusively from Romance, Ursula is even more vulnerable to the sophistry of aristocratic "escape", which, as Lawrence suggests, calls her, too, from the blood. Her grandmother, who became her "chief friend", "was a lady well-born, a land-owner's daughter" (40); "In Poland, the peasantry, the people, had been cattle to her" (53). Anna "was like a little savage in her arrogance" (81), whose "passion for eminence and dominance" found its "ideal" in Alexandra, Princess of Wales: "This lady was proud and royal, and stepped indifferently over all small, mean desires; so thought Anna, in her heart" (95). Baron Skrebensky represented to her "the real world, where kings and lords and princesses moved and fulfilled their shining lives, whilst queens and ladies and princesses upheld the noble order" (93).

To the "mirage of her reading", then, Ursula naturally adds "the illusion of her grandmother, of realities so shadowy and far-off that they became as mystic symbols: --peasant-girls with wreaths of blue flowers in their hair . . . how she was truly a princess of Poland, how in England she was under a spell" (268). With even more of a right than Miriam to the "hidden princess" fantasy, Ursula is understandably vulnerable to Anton who, in bringing "her a strong sense of the outer world" (269), revives her mother's dreams of a past world, where royalty "moved and fulfilled their shining lives". Proud that he is a Baron --"In England he is equivalent to a lord"--Ursula initially surrenders her self to become his muse, the mirror image of his own ego.

> She was thrilled with a new life. For the first time she was in love with a vision of herself: she saw as it were a fine little reflection of herself in his eyes. And she must act up to this. (293)

"The romance of the situation" (304) cannot, however, hold Ursula for long. She shares with Miriam, who hoped to ascend above the "common fry", the desire to move "on a high level, spurn the common mass"; but Ursula has not inherited from her mother Mrs Leivers' dread of the sensual and concomitant attraction to suffering. Just as she learned from Anna to demand a religion of resurrection, of joy rather than sadness, Ursula, like her mother, is "too staunch for joy and happiness" to abide for very long Romance's fascination with "sadness and the inevitable passing of things" (382). To resign oneself to "waiting" and the maiden's "fundamental sadness for enclosure" (382), is to resign oneself to a passivity that runs counter to the desire for fulfilment of the Brangwen Woman, ever coveting the distant "men's world", the need to "enlarge their own scope and range and freedom" (11). Easily bored by any one "pattern", easily "bored by . . . her old selves, Ursula craves continual resurrection of body and spirit".[18] So that when Anton's "vision" of her demands she "act up to" Elaine's and Miriam's "heavy brooding sadness" (412), Ursula looks to liberate herself somehow.

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[18]Vidas, 169.

2. The Southern *Femme Fatale*

If, as Vidas puts it, "Ursula's reactions are dependent on opposites",[19] so too are the accompanying shifts in imagery and language. The Maiden who "must have fair hair and a white skin"(248) one day, resurrects the next as her polar opposite, the Fatal Woman, apparently proud of "her black hair and clear golden skin, look[ing] rather tropical, like a Creole" (286). Anton's *femme fatale*, with her seductive "red, moist mouth", inherits from her mother and grandmother, too, the Fatal Woman's physical traits and character. "Somehow", Tom thinks to himself, it was Lydia's "dark, shapely head ... that revealed her his woman to him" (57). Will, having failed to transform Anna into the iconic abstraction of the religious female statue, ironically succumbs to the iconic absolute of the "tropical" *femme fatale* in Anna. His ambivalent attraction and fear in the face of her physical beauty recalls, of course, Jérôme's attitude toward the seductive Lucile, the attitude of Cleopatra's victims.[20]

> He had always, all his life, had a secret dread of Absolute Beauty. It had always been like a fetish to him, something to fear, really. For it was immoral and against mankind. So he had turned to the Gothic form,[21] which always asserted the broken desire of mankind in its pointed arches. . . . But now he had given way, and with infinite sensual violence gave himself to the realisation of this supreme, immoral Absolute Beauty, in the body of woman. . . .
>
> But still the thing terrified him. Awful and threatening it was, dangerous to a degree, even whilst he gave himself to it. It was pure darkness, also. All the shameful things of the body revealed themselves to him now with a sort of sinister, tropical beauty. (220)

Along with her "sinister tropical beauty", Anna leaves her "Creole" the indomitability of the feline, a metaphorical element Praz finds

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[19]Ibid.

[20]Praz, 205. See Introduction, 14.

[21]As did Paul to the "Gothic" in Miriam, abstracting her as the spiritual to counter, perhaps, similar fears of absolute sensual beauty. Paul tells Miriam she is like "the gothic arch, which, he said, leapt up at heaven and touched the ecstasy and lost itself in the divine" (215).

common in most Fatal Women.[22] Lydia had introduced the "exotic" and "indomitable" to the line of Brangwen women, what Tom perceived in her as a "foreign air", something "dominant in her foreign existence" (33); but the self-possession that manifested itself as the "inviolate" in her, had augmented to the farouche and "fierce" in Anna: "with wide black eyes, she had an odd little defiant look. . . . She seemed to be jealously guarding something" (33). "Superb in her indifference" (137), Anna "Victrix" instils in all the Brangwen girls "a curious blind dignity", but Ursula was particularly "proud in her family" (245). Lawrence's objective narrator describes Anna as a "wild thing" who "wanted her distance", "as proud and shadowy as a tiger, and as aloof" (92). Without turning her back on her father's mysticism, Ursula, too, is the indomitable sensual feline, a "wild animal", "free as a leopard that sends up its raucous cry in the night" (416). And just as the sensual tigress in her mother must destroy the abstraction of Will's suffering lamb--"I think that Lamb in Church . . . is the biggest joke" (150)-- the feline in Ursula--her God was the "lion", not the "passive subjects of some shepherd" (317)--must "annul" Anton when he proves to be as meek as the other "pale citizens", a "subdued beast in sheep's clothing" (415). "If the lamb might lie down with the lion, it would be a great honor to the lamb, but the lion's powerful heart would suffer no diminishing. She loved the dignity and self-possession of lions" (318).

The imagery informing the Fatal Woman in Ursula takes the first turn to the "South" culturally, as it does with Alissa, exchanging the Christian separation of body and spirit for classical religion's harmony. When Alissa is unable to bring to fruition her intimation that the pagan Provençal forest is "religious too", Gide ironically has her support herself momentarily against a phallic tree, like some awakening dryad--"Mon coeur battait très fort; je suis restée un instant appuyée contre un arbre" (*LPé*, 160). With only Jérôme's sterility and their common Jansenist guilt to guide her, however, she runs home before anyone else has awakened, apparently afraid they would somehow detect in her air the sensual realisation. With the Brangwen's particular admixture of "blood-intimacy" and Christianity flowing through her being, Ursula brings synthesis where Alissa must separate. Just before the objective narrator sees in her the tropical, the Creole, Ursula finds that nature speaks the

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[22]Praz, 198.

same language everywhere. Intoxicated by the perfumes and colours of autumn, "she fled away from the little, purple-red button-chrysanthemums like a frightened dryad, [yet] the bright yellow little chrysanthemums smelled so strong, her feet seemed to dither in a drunken dance" (285).

Lawrence's imagery implies that Ursula's harmonious blending of the Christian and pagan is but the natural religious synthesis for the girl who, from her earliest days, has always combined the strengths of both parents. "It knew its mother better, it wanted its mother more. But the brightest, sharpest little ecstasy was for the father" (197). The natural "abandon" of her "drunken dance" recalls Anna's sensual fertility dance "to the unseen Creator" (170); Ursula's consciousness comes from Will. Working together in the daughter, her parents' gifts allow her simultaneously to be one with the universe and to see that she is one.[23] Anna simply wanted "to be natural" (157), while "her father was the dawn wherein her consciousness woke up. But for him, she might have gone on like the other children . . . one with the flowers and insects and playthings, having no existence apart from the concrete object of her attention" (205). Ursula's quest, as Rossman has pointed out, is to hold on to the blood intimacy of the Brangwen men and the Brangwen women's craving for "mind-knowledge", to pursue the "higher being", the "finer more vivid circle of life".[24] Anna's jeer that the little "imps" carved in the friezes of Will's beloved Lincoln cathedral proved "that the cathedral was not absolute" (189) prompts in Will a painful epiphany: "There was much the church did not include. He thought of God, and of the whole blue rotunda of the day. There was something great and free. He thought of the ruins of the Grecian worship, and it seemed, a temple was never perfectly a temple, till it was ruined and mixed up with the winds and the sky and the herbs" (191). Ursula, as if building on her father's insight, fashions even greater "freedom" by collapsing any

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[23]Ursula rejects Anthony's (Maggie's brother) invitation to stay with him in the "Garden of Eden" because he was a "satyr" who "had no soul". Her final analysis of the relationship implies that her father's "consciousness" is the "soul's" perceptive organ: Anthony "was one with it. But she saw it, and was one with it. Her seeing separated them infinitely""(416-7). Ursula remains ambivalent about the perceptiveness that "separates" her from nature. Here she considers the soulless Anthony to be "the cleaner", while above she praises Will for being the "dawn of her consciousness".

[24]Rossman, "D. H. Lawrence and Women", 269.

distinctions between religions Christian and pagan, Western and Eastern: Winifred Inger provides only the language for what Ursula's parents had taught her dramatically:

> Gradually it dawned upon Ursula that all the religion she knew was but a particular clothing to a human aspiration. The aspiration was the real thing--the clothing was a matter almost of national taste or need. The Greeks had a naked Apollo, the Christians a white-robed Christ, the Buddhists a royal prince, the Egyptians their Osiris. Religions were local and religion was universal. (317)

Certain that "a few dryads, fauns, and nymphs had survived the flood", Ursula "wished that she had been a nymph". Rather than flee from the invitation of "le choeur de nymphes", as Alissa does, Ursula hopes to join it; rather than flee from the tree of "universal religion", one which symbolises the rebirth of body *and* spirit",[25] Ursula stands " before a great ash in worship" (311).

While Lawrence never has Ursula descend even as far south as Alissa, his own "Southern discourse" ties her quest for the sensual and spiritual to Italy, where he both finished *Sons and Lovers* and began The *Rainbow*.[26] Lawrence spent one-third of the remainder of his life in Italy, the country that "found for [him] so much that was lost",[27] the country that became for him what Provence and Algiers were for Gide, the salutary counterbalance against the repressive "North". Four months after he arrived in Italy for the first time, Lawrence wrote that his adopted country was a place where "blood consciousness" opposed the Northern need to intellectualise every experience. "That is why I like to live in Italy. The people are so unconscious; they only feel and want: they don't know".[28] At Lago di Garda, where he was finishing *Sons and*

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[25] Moore, 267, notes that Lawrence had read Frazer by the time he completed *Women in Love*. Ursula's religious views here recall part IV of *The Golden Bough*, in which Osiris figures as the Egyptian counterpart of Christ, both being "dying-reviving tree Gods". Apollo, as Frazer notes, is associated with the laurel, a further suggestion perhaps of Lawrence's mythological purpose here. The allusive tie underlines that Lawrence equates Ursula's eventual revival , like those of Osiris, Christ (and, perhaps, Buddha under the Bho tree), with the rebirth of an entire society.

[26] *D. H. Lawrence and the Experience of Italy*, Jeffrey Meyers (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982). See also Moore, 309-31 and Worthen, *DHL : The Early Years*, 425-61.

[27] *Sea and Sardinia* , 307. Meyers uses the quotation as part of his epigraph for chapter I.

[28] *Letters*, I, 504.

Lovers and beginning *The Rainbow*, Lawrence argues for a balanced religious perspective, much like Gide's, which recognises the need for both the pagan and the Christian to attain the Absolute:

> What is really Absolute is the mystic Reason which connects both Infinites, the Holy Ghost that relates both natures of God. If we now wish to make a living State, we must build it up to the idea of the Holy Spirit, the supreme Relationship. We must say, the pagan Infinite is infinite, the Christian Infinite is infinite: these are our two Consummations, in both of these we are consummated. But that which relates them alone is absolute. . . . When both are there, they are like a superb bridge, on which we can stand and know the world, my world, the two halves of the universe.[29]

Even the similarity of the metaphor, the "superb bridge", arching, like Ursula's rainbow, to connect both halves of our nature, suggests Lawrence is working through in this essay the same quest on which he sends Ursula in the novel.

In *D. H. Lawrence and the Experience of Italy*, Jeffrey Meyers offers a list of Italy's symbolic values for Lawrence that might well serve to delineate Ursula's specific needs in the final part of her quest for harmony: "Italy represents freedom and inspiration", "primitive passion", "the conflict between chaos and authority", "a pagan landscape", "a way to rebirth". And while Lawrence never shifts the novel's action to Italy, he successfully juxtaposes Ursula's increasingly "Southern" suppleness with Skrebensky's "Northern" rigidity through a "Southern discourse" in which geographical place is awash, in which, as they do in *La Porte étroite*, the "East", the "Tropics", Africa, and Italy interfuse seamlessly.

Ursula's metaphorical descent to Italy not so much introduces her to new possibilities of being as it, just as it had for Lawrence, awakens in her "strange and wonderful chords . . . after many hundreds of years of complete forgetfulness".[30] The Brangwen "blood intimacy had flourished in the "North", much as it does for Gide's Heurtevents[31]; the "Oriental" and exotic, as discussed above, arrived via her Polish blood. When Lydia

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[29]*Twilight in Italy*, 73.
[30]*Sea and Sardinia*, 307.
[31]*L'Immoraliste*,41. See chapter VII, footnote 72.

tells the adolescent Ursula of the fiery Lensky, "she at once identified herself with her Polish grandfather", who shares with her the "dark eyes" and leonine nature.[32] When her sojourns into the Old Testament teach her that "the Eastern man must see a thing swelling to fill all heaven, or dwindled to a mere nothing . . . she immediately sympathized with the Eastern mind" (258). It is, in fact, this same passionate Eastern nature that first attracted her to Skrebensky, whom she first describes as the very archetype of the "Oriental":

> He was in possession of himself . . . so *spontaneous* and revealed in his movements. . . . His resting in his own fate gave him an appearance of *indolence,* almost of *languor;* he made no exuberant movement. When he sat down, he seemed to go loose, *languid.* (271; emphases mine)

When he admits to Ursula that he "almost likes" the sensual "blood fear" of the Africans, he "transferred to her the hot, fecund darkness that possessed his own blood" (413). But somehow his years in the English military have turned him against his own nature, creating a "civic" colonial self bent on, what for him, constitutes an ironic sort of cultural suicide. Even before Ursula's Italian experience underlines to what extent Skrebensky had lost touch with his being, she accuses him:

> "You think the Indians are simpler than us, and so you'll enjoy being near them and being a lord over them", she said."And you'll feel so righteous, governing them for their own good. Who are you, to feel righteous. What are you righteous about, in your governing. Your governing stinks. What do you govern for, but to make things as dead and mean as they are here?" (427-8)

It is in "Italy" that Ursula has an intimation that her marriage to Skrebensky would make her an accomplice in the destruction of her own "Southern" self. The imagery signalling her Southern rebirth begins subtly enough, with their drinking of "chianti" (436) on the night she first tells Skrebensky she does not want to be married. Entering into the communion symbolised by this wine would be to submit to pity--"You won't cry again, will you, Tony?" (434). She has already, Anton believes, "cruelly coldly defaced" "his manhood" in refusing to marry him. "Was she to be conquered by this?" (436), the tears of the suffering lamb.

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[32]Lydia describes him as "a clever man, as quick as a lion" (237).

Initially acquiescing, Ursula concedes to spend the night with him in London:

> They went to an Italian hôtel somewhere, and had a sombre bedroom with a very large bed, clean, but sombre. The ceiling was painted with a bunch of flowers in a big medallion over the bed. She thought it was pretty. . . .
>
> He came to her, and cleaved to her very close, like steel cleaving and clinching on to her. Her passion was roused, it was fierce but cold. But it was fierce, and extreme, and good, their passion this night. He slept with her fast in his arms. All night long he held her fast against him. She was passive, acquiescent. But her sleep was not very deep nor very real. (437).

The cold metallic element of Anton's passion suggests the "mechanism of his life", the "cold world of rigidity, dead walls and mechanical traffic" he has chosen to defend. Anton, like Ursula's uncle Tom, let the machinery of sterile materialism "carry him", was so much "warm clay lifted through the recurrent action of day after day by the great machine from which it derived its motion" (327). For Ursula to remain "passive, acquiescent" here, would be to follow Winifred Inger's lead, sacrificing her independence to become mistress to Tom and the mechanical pit.

Fortunately, Ursula's acquiescence is not "very real"; fortunately, her metaphorical rebirth is:

> She woke in the morning to a sound of water dashed on a courtyard, to sunlight streaming through a lattice. She thought she was in a foreign country. And Skrebensky was there an incubus upon her. (437)

Skrebensky has become Lawrence's consummate Englishman, his cold sterility "foreign" in a "country" characterised by the elemental fertility of water and sun. Ursula's "abandon" in the warmer ambience recalls Gide's in Africa, Lucile's expansiveness and ease that tempt Alissa in the forest at Aigues-Vives:

> She was in some other land, some other world, where the old restraints had dissolved and vanished, where one moved freely, not afraid of one's fellow man, nor wary, nor on the defensive, but calm, indifferent, at one's ease. Vaguely, in a sort of silver light, she wandered at large and at

> ease. The bonds of the world were broken. This world of England had vanished away. She heard a voice in the yard below calling:
>
> "O' Giovann'--O'-O'-O' Giovann'--!"
>
> And she knew she was in a new country, in a new life, It was very delicious to lie thus still, with one's soul wandering freely and simply in the silver light of some other, simpler, more finely natural world. (437)

Ursula *feels* that Skrebensky is the "restraint", the "bonds", and Lawrence's imagery suggests he personifies the "unnatural" world of England, the "foreboding waiting to command her. She became more aware of Skrebensky. She knew he was waking up. She must modify her soul, depart from her further world, for him" (437).

One of the "sensual" Italian peasants Lawrence so admired,[33] however, delays Ursula's departure. "His face had an almost African imperturbability, impassive, incomprehensible" (438). His failure to understand Skrebensky's comment that "One might be in Italy", suggests, variously, his wisdom of "the flesh", Skrebensky's inability to "feel" the same sort "blood knowledge" he had felt in Africa. The Italian "would understand nothing", Skrebensky says, though Ursula communicates with him well enough: "It made Ursula shudder slightly, the quick, sharp-sighted, intent animality of the man" (438).

Confusing her love for her "new world" with her feeling for Anton, Ursula initially finds him "beautiful to her, but she was detached from him by a chill distance", the essential distance between the cold, mechanical world of England and the sunny, fluid world of Italy. Anton "aroused no fecundity in her"; he is merely a mathematical abstraction, now "added up, finished". Having combined Italy and Africa, Lawrence punctuates the Southern discourse with Ursula's thoughts on India, though she does not consciously understand how they relate to her sojourn in "the finer, more natural" South. The Orient still attracts her, but not if she must live amongst the "dead and mean" Northerners.

> India tempted her--the strange, strange land. But with the thought of Calcutta, or Bombay, or of Simla, and of the

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[33]Meyers, 3. See also *Twilight in Italy*, particularly the essays "The Spinner and the Monks", "The Dance", and "Il Duro".

> European population, India was no more attractive to her than Nottingham. (439)

Skrebensky is, as she felt, the Northern "incubus", which Ursula can cast off only by becoming the Southern "succubus". Before Skrebensky sent "her a box of sweets" along with the message that he might have to go to fight in Africa, Ursula had, in fact, already destroyed once "the blind, persistent, inert burden" upon her (296). But when Skrebensky is about to set off for war, the sugar-coated (as the present implies), "minted subscription of romance and honour", along with the heady stuff of "separation", seduces her to re-assume the posture of the waiting Elaine: "She secreted the sweets under her bed, and ate them all herself" (303). The night of Winifred and Tom's wedding, the night Lawrence describes her as the Creole, Ursula had "annulled" Skrebensky in two stages. Like Carmen and Cleopatra, Ursula first emasculates the colonial soldier psychologically, exposing as specious and childish his code of military honour. War, like "Northern" religion, Ursula implies, prefers death to life and annihilates the "self".

> "Why would you want to go [to war]?"
> "I should be doing something, it would be genuine. It's a sort of toy-life as it is. "
> "But what would you be doing if you went to war?"
> "I would be making railways or bridges. . . ."
> "But you'd only make them to be pulled down again. . . . It seems just as much a game . . . ."
> "It's about the most serious business there is, fighting."
> A sense of hard separateness came over her.
> "Why is fighting more serious than anything else?" she asked.
> "You either kill or get killed. . . ."
> "But when you're dead you don't matter anymore," she said. (288)

> "I hate soldiers, they are stiff and wooden. What do you fight for, really?"
> "I would fight for the nation. . . . I belong to the nation and must do my duty by the nation. . . ."
> "It seems to me," she answered, "as if you weren't anybody--as if there weren't anybody there, where you are. Are you anybody, really? You seem like nothing to me." (289)

Just prior to the second stage, the physical destruction, Lawrence allows Skrebensky to add another reason why Ursula must play the Fatal

Woman: his inability to bring her the necessary harmony of body and spirit. This time it is a Northern "peasant", the "grimy" barge owner with the "ragged moustache", that had made Ursula "feel the richness of her own life"(293), the relative poverty of Skrebensky's-- he "had created a deadness around her, a sterility, as if the world were ashes" (294). Skrebensky envies the man for "his worship of the woman in Ursula, a worship of body and soul together, the man's body and soul wistful and worshipping the body and spirit of the girl. . . . Why could not he himself desire a woman so? Why did he never really want a woman, not with the whole of him: never loved, never worshipped, only just physically wanted her?" (294).

On the night Winifred acquiesces to a similar "nothingness" in her Uncle Tom, Ursula must either destroy or surrender to Skrebensky's enveloping "deadness". As in the lovemaking scene in the Italian hotel, Ursula experiences Skrebensky's "nothingness", paradoxically, as an oppressively heavy spiritual burden, the metaphorical cold metal of an inert civilisation. "Skrebensky, like a loadstone weighed upon her. She felt the burden of him, the blind, persistent, inert burden. He was inert, and he weighed upon her. . . . If she could but get away to the clean free moonlight" (296). Anton is "afraid of the great moon-conflagration. . . . He knew he would die. She stood for some moments out in the overwhelming luminosity of the moon. She seemed a beam of gleaming power" (298). Skrebensky strives unsuccessfully "with all his energy to enclose her, to have her".

> She took him in the kiss, hard her kiss seized upon him, hard and fierce and burning corrosive as the moonlight. She seemed to be destroying him. He was reeling, summoning all his strength to keep his kiss upon her, to keep himself in the kiss.
>
> But hard and fierce she had fastened upon him, cold as the moon and burning as a fierce salt. Till gradually his warm, soft iron yielded, and she was there fierce, corrosive, seething with his destruction, seething like some cruel corrosive salt around the last substance of his being, destroying him, destroying him in the kiss. And her soul crystalised with triumph, and his soul was dissolved with agony and annihilation. So she held him there, the victim, consumed, annihilated. She had triumphed: he was not any more. (299)

Tamara Alinei, in an article that analyses the moon motif throughout Lawrence's fiction, relates the lunar sway over Anna and Ursula to something in their being that is "actively destructive, driven by a will to dominance in their relationships with men--the import of the contexts is unambiguous. . . . Ursula is both aggressor and victim--of herself, a woman who has forfeited her possibilities for joy and sexual fulfilment".[34] Clearly, however, Ursula destroys only in a literal self-defence, to defend her individual "self". The context of the wedding, which marks Winifred's acquiescence to the inert "dross" in Tom, suggests Ursula is confirming more than destroying the "nothingness" of the civilisation Skrebensky embodies, the "nothingness" he has become in giving his self to the meaningless abstraction of the "nation", the "nothingness" she might become if he were triumphant: "If he married he would have to assume his social self. . . . One's social wife was almost a material symbol" (419). She does not forfeit her possibilities for "joy", rather she intuits that she needs to wait for a man who will incorporate the same balance of body and soul the barge driver sees in her. She has met, as the original Brangwen Woman had wanted, one of the "fighting host" waging battle "on the edge of the unknown", and she has found him lacking.

Having recovered from the recrudescence of Romance, and strengthened by her trip to Italy, Ursula does not hesitate to defend her "self" when Skrebensky fails her the second time. At the best of times, as Rossman says, "Skrebensky is either cerebral or sensual, but cannot effect the harmony of body and spirit which Ursula seeks with increasing desperation".[35] In Italy, Ursula finds, he fails even to be "a man who could really let go" (440), who could "abandon" himself to a "reckless passionateness". Rather than acquiesce to his "nothingness", she must annul him again. Leaving the party given by his great-aunt, the world of "social pretensions" she would join as Mrs Skrebensky, Ursula and Anton come across her passionate and revealing moon:

> He felt his chest laid bare, where the secret was heavily hidden. He felt himself fusing down into nothingness, like a bead that rapidly disappears in an incandescent flame.

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[34]Alinei, "D. H. L.'s Natural Imagery", 133.

[35]Rossman, "D. H. Lawrence and Women", 271.

> "How wonderful!" cried Ursula, in low, calling tones. "How wonderful!"
>
> And she went forward, plunging into it. He followed behind. She too seemed to melt into the glare, towards the moon. . . . She gave her breast to the moon, her belly to the flashing, heaving water. He stood behind encompassed, a shadow ever dissolving. . . . And she seized hold of his arm, held him fast, as if captive, and walked him a little way by the edge of the dazzling, dazing water.
>
> Then there in the great flare of light, she clinched hold of him, hard, as if suddenly she had the strength of destruction, she fastened her arms round him and tightened him in her grip, whilst her mouth sought his in a hard, rending, ever-increasing kiss, till his body was powerless in her grip, his heart melted in fear from the fierce, beaked, harpy's kiss. . . .
>
> The fight, the struggle for consummation was terrible. It lasted till it was agony to his soul, till he succumbed; till he gave way as if dead. (443-5)

Lawrence's imagery points simultaneously to antipodes here, suggesting this time *both* lovers evanesce into "nothingness"--Ursula into the paradoxical loss of self that precedes communion with the "Oneness", Anton into the essential "nothingness" of Northern civilisation. Out of her eyes, "there rolled a tear" because Skrebensky has failed her. "Ursula expects", says Rossman, "a sexual union which will set flowing the passionate springs of vitality within her and which will, beyond that, help her to transcend herself in 'Oneness with the infinite' life force outside her"[36]; Ursula expects a union with a "Oneness" represented by the rainbow which, standing on the earth and arching through the heavens, connects flesh with soul, finite with the infinite. She needs, in terms of the novel, a "Son of God" sufficiently protean to be at once a spiritual and conscious Will as well as a sensual and unconscious Italian; she needs a lover who, in terms of Lawrence's' 1923 essay, "Love, Sex, Men, and Women", can be St. Francis to her Clare and Tristan to her Isolde, without confining her to any iconic extremity or fashioning her into a mirror image of the male ego.

> Not all love between man and woman is whole. It may be all gentle, the merging into Oneness, like St. Francis and St. Clare, or Mary of Bethany and Jesus. There may be no separateness discovered, no singleness won, no unique otherness admitted. This is a half love, what is called sacred

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[36]Ibid., 273.

> love. And this is the love which knows the purest happiness. On the other hand, the love may be all a lovely battle of sensual gratification, the beautiful but deadly counterposing of male against female, as Tristan and Isolde. . . . This is the profane love, that ends in flamboyant and lacerating tragedy when the two which are so singled out are finally torn apart by death. . . . There must be two in one, always two in one--the sweet love of communion and the fierce, proud love of sensual fulfilment, both together in one love. And then we are like a rose. We surpass even love, love is encompassed and surpassed. We are two who have a pure connexion. We are two, isolated like gems in our unthinkable otherness. But the rose contains and transcends us, we are one rose, beyond.[37]

Lawrence implies that in Ursula "the perfect thing existed" (294); she needs now to wait, for "the man would come out of Eternity to which she herself belonged" (457).

Lawrence and Gide, then, combat one set of cultural" myths with another, combat Northern coldness with Southern warmth, the Madonna, Martyr and Maiden with a Carmen, "not a thing passive". Arguably, Ursula emerges victoriously where Miriam and Alissa fail because her family has provided her with a wider iconic spectrum. Ursula evolves as something of a "Superwoman", product of several generations of "blood-intimacy" and Oriental self-possession; Alissa's world refuses to encourage the proud Creole in her, Miriam's mother inculcates in her the puritan fear of sexuality. Perhaps Ursula survives, too, because she is willing to wait for a second knight once the first fails her, while Miriam and Alissa continue to forego their own desires to satisfy the increasingly impossible demands of the first young men whose sensitivity seems to match their own. Finally, Ursula attains a harmony of body and spirit because she has the Nietzschean strength to dispense with cultural codes that would limit her growth, to look inward for a definition of "virtue", while Alissa and Miriam continue to look outward.

> Virtues are as dangerous as vices, in so far as they are allowed to rule over one as authorities and laws coming from outside and not as qualities one develops one's self. The latter is the only right way; they should be the most personal

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[37] *Phoenix*, 154-55.

> means of defence and most individual needs--the determining factors of precisely one's existence and growth, which we recognize and acknowledge independently of the question whether others grow with us with the help of the same or different principles. . . . The extent to which one can dispense with Virtue is the measure of one's strength.[38]

[38]Nietzsche, *The Will to Power, The Complete Works*, XIV-XV, ed. Oscar Levy, trans. Anthony Ludovici (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), sections 326-7.

Conclusion

No matter how great a change may take place in society, romance will turn up again, as hungry as ever, looking for new hopes and desires to feed on. The perennially child-like quality of romance is marked by its extraordinary persistent nostalgia, its search for some kind of imaginative golden age in time and space.

Northrop Frye[1]

Nous sommes innocents, nous sommes heureux; et tu ne peux que nuire à notre bonheur. Nous suivons le pur instinct de la nature.

A Tahitian elder to Bougainville[2]

Arguably, when Lawrence tells Edward Garnett that *Sons and Lovers* dramatises the "tragedy of thousands of young men in England",[3] he is thinking of more than the "tragedy" effected by overbearing mothers. The novel attends as well to the cultural tragedy for the legions of young men who, like the young Paul, were "prisoners of industrialism" (114), confined by an era too spiritually impoverished to satisfy their desires. Romance's Arthurs and Ivanhoes and Werthers sanctioned a sensitivity in these youths that had been deemed "effeminacy" by the men in their world, stirred in them the desire for an "imaginative Golden Age". Romance's purposeful confusion of its heroes and Christ seemed natural enough to young men nurtured by the sweet-agony ambience of their mothers' chapel Christianity. And when the mother no longer satisfied the desires equally Christian and romantic, it would seem natural, too, to find in a sensitive female peer one who would ensure their heroism by being for them, alternately, the protective mother and the defenceless maiden.

Thousands of dissatisfied girls, fed equally on the dreams of Christianity and Romance, would ignore the impossibility of their

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[1]Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), 1973.

[2]Diderot, *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville, Oeuvres*, 970.

[3]*Letters*, I, 477.

heroes' demands to play the maiden to their knight, the Madonna to their Christ. For the young women, the tragedy occurs when their opposite numbers awaken from Romance's child-like dreamscape to the "pure instinct of nature", to "blood-consciousness". They now find restrictive their original golden age and desire instead the Oneness with a sensual nature promised them by a new cultural code. And it is at this juncture that Lawrence's words to Garnett echo the narrator's intimation about Michel's tragedy: "Mais il en est plus d'un aujourd'hui, je la crains, qui oserait en ce récit se reconnaître" (10). Gide and Lawrence, in working through their ambivalence toward their own movement from the codes of a more cerebral world to those of a sensual world, recount the stories of an entire age, a transition in which Goethe would give way to Nietzsche, Apollo to Dionysus, reason to instinct. Suddenly, the young woman's "virtues" of passivity, virginity, and suffering were deemed vices, all that their codes had taught them was natural was deemed unnatural; the Knight enters the dark forest to discover that the maiden, not the Dionysian dragon, must be destroyed, that the young women who had "urged" them to life had begun to suffocate them.

The iconic roles that had promised an escape from the provincial, then, in fact imprison the young women further. Sacrificial victim for her lover's rite of passage, the Maiden is denied access to the forest even when she is willing to accompany her knight there. Gide and Lawrence, interestingly, seem to suggest that the women are inherently better able to achieve the balance of both codes: "religious" Miriam invites the sexual, Alissa senses that the South is religious "too", Marceline welcomes Michel's return to health in Africa, Ursula embraces all the icons. But since the young man finds his lover in his original world, his "authentic-self" in the Other, he cannot take her with him. He vilifies her because she embodies for him a world that restricted his growth, encouraged his weakness; he holds on to her because she symbolises for him an absolute that will serve as a potential refuge as he ventures into a world void of absolutes. Paralysed by the contrasting forces of her lover's nostalgia and scorn, the young woman languishes in her room. Male-created codes demand that the quest for self belong to the male alone.

By using icons as part of their figurative language and structure, and by showing dramatically how much Paul, Jérôme, Michel, and Anton

encourage these icons, which eventually destroy their lovers, Lawrence and Gide show themselves sympathetic to their female characters, sensitive to the ways in which cultural myths have entrapped them. This is not to say that Lawrence and Gide are unsympathetic to their young male lovers; the authors simply try to pose truthfully the widespread tragedy, without fashioning their work according to a particular preconception. What Beebe says of Lawrence seems equally true for Gide: "the experience is lived in the process of writing as Lawrence . . . explores a situation which he does not fully understand".[4] But in measuring truthfully the distance between the young lovers' real worlds and their worlds of desire, Gide and Lawrence find that in an age experiencing a cataclysmic teleological transition, the Miriams, Marcelines, and Alissas will be destroyed for adopting the patterns originally demanded by their heroes; that only the Ursulas, women strong enough to slay their "pale" knights, will survive.

In exploring honestly experiences they do not fully understand, Lawrence and Gide eventually define through their art a pivotal point in European culture--a time of ferment, in which values are thrown back into the melting pot, a post-Nitzschean phenomenon in which the Anti-Christ supersedes the Christ, the Black Knight the White, The Fatal Woman the Maiden and Madonna. These women come of age at a point of crisis for the cultural definition of gender and gender roles. Consequently, more than it is looking at two writers, this study is examining a list of exemplars, fields of force in which new cultural codes are being worked out. What Lawrence and Gide learn about the destructive interrelationships of these icons as they attempt to shed their sicknesses in books diagnoses well the tragedy of thousands of young women throughout the "North".

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Madonna. Before attempting to determine how similar or how different are Jérôme's and Paul's demands on the Madonna, the first of the icons to be considered, it seems worthwhile to speculate on why two

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[4]Beebe, 102.

"Puritans" would incorporate the "Catholic" Madonna in their art at all. And perhaps it is their needs as artists that demand they undo the work of the iconoclastic Reformation. For Gide, who speculates that perhaps he had been drawn to art because it was the only way to realise the accord of the contradictory influence of his father's South and his mother's North, it seems art allowed him to work through the pull of his parents' Protestantism and that of his Uncle Henry's "sweeter" Catholicism.[5] To deny the cult of Mary, as the young Gide had been taught to do,[6] would be to deny the rich artistic history of both icon and word, an allusive backdrop that adds an attractive "feminine" warmth to his work. In Gide's early stages of love with his cousin, he began to wonder if Protestantism responded to his needs, if he did not need to listen to Catholicism, "car enfin je ne laissais pas d'être sensible à tout l'art dont elle s'entourait".[7] Lawrence, in both his "Italian" books and his *Study of Thomas Hardy,* even when critical of what Catholic artists have done with the image of Woman, implies that his own conception of gender derives from the history of "Maleness and Femaleness in Art", a history in which Mary has been the central female subject.

Gide's and Lawrence's confusion of art and life seems to answer a need as well in their own relationships with the mothers brought to artistic life in Mrs Palissier and Mrs Morel. The Madonna brings an "Oriental" sensuality to an angular Puritan maternal ambience. Where the autobiographical mothers demand, the Madonna submits, where they would censure she forgives.

The excessive devotion of Jérôme's and Paul's mothers initially allows Alissa and Miriam a certain dominance in their love relationship since the lachrymose child depends on their maternal comfort. Still, the Christ who upbraids his mother because he must be about his father's business, seeks maternal passivity as a necessary condition of his "divine" activity. The Christ-lovers offer their Madonna, then, only a

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[5]*Si le grain,* 97.

[6]Gide recalls that his grandmother fell back and fainted when she discovered an altar to the Virgin in her converted son's room. Gide remembers, too, how a schoolmate's explanation that Catholics were those who believed in the Holy Virgin provoked his first declaration of religious allegiance: "Je m'écriai qu'alors j'étais sûrement protestant" (*Si le grain,* 81, 105).

[7]*Si le grain,* 213.

contributory heroism as the vessels of creative conception--for Jérôme's theological history and Paul's painting. The suffering perceived as an outward sign of the Madonna's heroism proceeds more from the insensitive Christs in Jérôme and Paul than it does from the brutish world that persecutes the young women. And it is the impossible platonic demand to be, like the Madonna, at once virginal and fertile that precipitates most her fruitless martyrdom, one in which she is pulled between desire and renunciation on her Catherine Wheel.

Perhaps even more destructive to Miriam and Alissa is the constant pull between their lovers' conscious demand to play the comforting Madonna to the lachrymose Christs and their lovers' unconscious demand not to impede their growth into manhood. While Alissa provides the support and comfort consistent with the Marian litany's portrait of the Blessed Virgin as refuge of the weak, her journal suggests she wants Jérôme to force the door of her kitchen garden, to "manfully" take the lead in a relationship both sensual and spiritual. Miriam's initial desire to "be mistress of him in his weakness, take care of him" (174) eventually gives way to anger when Paul continues to play the "unreasonable child" (340). She refuses his offer "to have me, to marry me" because he looks to her, now that he has lost Mrs Morel, for maternal dependency, and "she could not take him and relieve him of the responsibility of himself" (462).

Lawrence's conclusion suggests Paul finally *does* begin to take responsibility for himself. In his final refusal to "give in", his decision to choose the "city's gold phosphorescence" rather than "follow" his mother to the "darkness" (464), he chooses life over death, the responsibility of adulthood over the dependency of childhood. Sadly, in believing that Miriam wanted to be "another mother" (340) to him, when, in truth, she wanted to be his lover, he leaves her "feeling dead" (463) because she is collectively guilty, from Paul's perception, with Mrs Morel.

Gide's conclusion denies Jérôme ever experiences a similar intimation, implies rather that he remains frozen in childhood. Insensitive to Alissa's desires at their last meeting, Jérôme falls prey to childish despair, weeping fecklessly at her garden door well into the

night. Even after he has read Alissa's journal and had a decade to decipher its cry for help, Jérôme fails to mature. The last image of his *récit* places Jérôme in the sanctuary where Juliette takes "refuge" among Alissa's furniture. Gide's dramatic irony suggests Jérôme has unwittingly ended his pilgrimage in the same "shelter" from the world that Alissa had provided while she was alive; that, still insensitive to Alissa's desire, he feels only the Madonna's "melodious peace", her "purity and pensive grace" (137). Jérôme hears the whisper of "the past, sees once more Alissa's room" (182), but his *récit* implies he remains blind to the human nature of her love, just as he has remained insensitive to Juliette's all these years. The irony of Jérôme's last line returns to plague the inventor: "Une servante entra, qui apportait la lampe" (182)--insufficient light, Gide suggests, for the eyes of a child.

The Maiden finds herself surrounded by the same religious aura as does the Madonna, entrapped equally by the same platonic postures, ones that seemed initially the keys to her liberation. Having "waited" for the knight who would elevate her above her brutish world, she finds herself waiting again as the spiritual muse for his heroic male activity. Even when the Beatrician role as spiritual guide ostensibly places Paul and Jérôme in a dependent position--"C'est toi qui me montres la route"(36)--the world recognises as important only the accomplishments in the external world of male activity. The need to maintain her virginity, her sole "heroic activity", redoubles, ironically, the Maiden's iconic passivity. It is this heroic resistance to sexual desire, along with her patience, that marries the Romance ethos to the Christian in the common belief that suffering is the sign of the Maiden's and the Madonna's "martyrdom".

Perhaps the greatest difference between Paul and Jérôme as questing knights lies in the implied value of the work inspired by their muses. Discovered in the pastoral picturesque, Miriam inspires Paul's artistic eye from their first encounter. She "brought forth to him his imaginations"(241), urged the life warmth "into intensity like a white light", stimulated him "into knowledge of the work he had produced unconsciously" (190). Paul comes to believe that his work "was good and valuable", and the world agreed sufficiently to make it "possible to earn a livelihood by his art" (345). While it is debatable whether Paul the artist

abandons Miriam because he has exhausted her as muse or because his own conception has limited her as muse, it seems clear that Lawrence has written a *Künstlerroman*.

Gide hides in dramatic irony the *Künstlerroman* in Jérôme's *récit*. The "flaccid" prose and the sterility of Jérôme's vision suggest his proposed history of religious philosophy is the same sort of dry academic work to which Michel devotes himself before his trip to Africa; and it is telling that Jérôme's muse--"collaboratrice"--imaginatively supplies in her letters the missing sensual element to his accounts of the South. The real artist, Gide implies, is Abel who, believing he was born to be a writer (68), had hoped Juliette would serve as muse to nurture his art. Gide's playful autobiographical sally might suggest that while Jérôme had travelled to the South and yet not seen it, Abel had been sufficiently influenced by the abandon and sensuality of his adoptive sister, Lucile, to be able to write *Privautés* (a work whose provocative title recalls Gide's own *L'Immoraliste)* without having to travel to the South. It seems important, too, that Alissa, who has yet to embark on her journey of self-discovery, finds only "shame" where the reviewers see "grace" and "lightness", the work of a "grand talent" (107). By offering Abel as a foil to Jérôme, Gide seems to suggest that it is his lack of spirit rather than Alissa's potential as muse or the potential of the South that troubles Jérôme's "artistic" growth.

Finally, Gide's and Lawrence's parody-romances might be most interesting at the point where parody seems to break down, a point at which Paul and Jérôme and, perhaps the authors themselves, look with equal yearning to Romance's paradoxical promises of both a future *telos* and a past nostalgia. The nostalgia is at once personal, cultural, and artistic. The Madonna and Maiden become one in offering Jérôme and Paul a return to the womb, the eternal refuge when Jérôme tires of his pilgrimages or Paul of his Fatal Woman. The Maidens "wait" in pastoral worlds, ironically more idyllic than either of the knight's "maternal" homes. Paul's (and Lawrence's) company cottage in the mining town of Bestwood and Jérôme's (and Gide's) small apartment in Paris lie at the intersection of an increasingly industrialised and commercial world; at Miriam's Willey Farm and Alissa's Fongueusemare, maternal and cultural refuges combine, allowing the knights--and the authors--a

return to both a personal and cultural Eden, a traditional society characterised by its apparent harmony with nature.

The Martyr seeks to rise above her secondary position as muse to set out on her own "quest" for Oneness with the Absolute. Her desired heroism and independence are undermined by her reliance on a pattern delineated by male mentors faithful to a patriarchal Church, so that she fights any "uncertainty" encountered along the way by redoubling her asceticism. Once again, suffering and passivity combine in her mimesis of Christ, an imitation of his passive Passion rather than of his active ministry. Once again virginity galvanises suffering, since the martyr's sainthood is attained only by a victory of spirit over flesh. And finally, once again, Alissa's and Miriam's heroic aspirations are thwarted since they seek refuge in a "jealous" Christ only when Jérôme and Paul repeatedly prove to be unreliable mortal saviours.

In attempting to find the most valuable lesson from the Martyr Icon we need consider simultaneously that of the Fatal Woman, since both before and after the cultural transition charted in these works the two have always been inextricably tied: before the change they were seen as antitheses, not so much separated by 180 degrees as they were by a single degree, the maiden's slightest transgression; after the change they remain antitheses, though it is the fatal woman's abandon rather than the Maiden's renunciation that is rewarded.

The Fatal Woman exchanges the Martyr's cult of death for a cult of life, renunciation for abandon. Where cultural mythologies have demanded antitheses of the Madonna and Maiden, the *femme fatale* demands for herself synthesis, the complete arc of Ursula's rainbow, spanning earth and heaven, body and spirit. She finds in a real or metaphorical "South" the blood and flesh antidote for the "North's" repressive spirituality. Secure in the knowledge of her self, she offers her male lover a glimpse into his "être authentique".

The Fatal Woman underlines for both authors their attempt to chronicle at this pivotal point of Western cultural history the shift in cultural codes concerning gender roles. The Madonna, Maiden and Martyr fail to adapt to this post-Nitzschean world because they were

fashioned according to definitions of "Nature" and "Virtue" that are now being stood on their head; the Fatal Woman succeeds because she embodies the freedom granted by this cultural reversal. Knowing instinctively that the virtuous is found in abandon rather than in restraint, the Fatal Woman rejects the martyr's passive heroism as false, choosing rather the true active quest into the forest of the self.

By the time Miriam and Alissa inherit the code of Romance, it is one with Jérôme's Puritan code in defining virtue as nature's archenemy. The Princesse de Clève's mother instructs that "virtue" is maintained by only "une extrême défiance de soi-même",[8] just as Jérôme's parents have inculcated in him the puritan definition of "la vertu" as the suppression of the heart's impulses. In finding that "virtuous" self-renunciation had become "natural" to him, Jérôme implies an ethos that stands as the polar opposite of that which Michel learns at the feet of Ménalque. The moral "parent" of a new generation, Ménalque instructs, "Je ne prétends à rien qu'au naturel, et, pour chaque action, le plaisir que j'y prends m'est signe que je devais la faire" (*L'Immoraliste,* 118). Ménalque, then, implicitly defines virtuous conduct as that which follows nature; Romance and Christianity define virtuous conduct as that which resists it.

While Gide would deny that the Nietzsche he read during the composition of *L'Immoraliste* "influenced" importantly the novel,[9] Ménalque's cult of a robust natural virtue resembles that of the "Superman". Certainly Gide seems to be alluding to *The Birth of Tragedy* when he speaks of discovering on the African trips that inspire Michel's story a new moral code informed by the dispute between "Dionysus and Apollo",[10] the German philosopher's classical clothing for the the split between flesh and spirit. To resolve the discordant duality of spirit and flesh into "harmony", Gide needed to ask himself in Africa, "au nom de quel Dieu, de quel idéal me défendez-vous de vivre selon ma nature? Et cette nature, où m'entraînerait-elle, si simplement je la suivais?"[11]

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[8]*Clèves,* 137.

[9]*Journal,* 4 August 1922, 739. For perhaps the most helpful article on Nietzsche's influence on Gide, see Peter Schnyder's "Gide, Lecteur de Nietzsche", *Travaux de Littérature* 3 (1990):203-27.

[10]*Si le grain,* 360.

[11]*Si le grain,* 284.

Nietzsche's answer is strikingly close to the one Michel learns in the desert, the one that Alissa intuits in the southern pagan forest: "The gospel of universal harmony is sounded" when the bond of "mystical Oneness" is "forged once more by the magic of the Dionysiac rite, [and] nature itself, long alienated or subjugated, rises again to celebrate the reconciliation with her prodigal son, man".[12]

Lawrence, of course, holds similarly that virtue must follow nature for the self to achieve that mystical Oneness; and while he makes no reference to the Apollonian-Dionysian split, his condemnation of the puritan opposition between body and soul, as we have seen above, recalls Nietzsche's belief that "blood is spirit" and that "sagacity [is] in the body".[13] Shortly after the completion of *Sons and Lovers,* Lawrence wrote to Ernest Collings, "My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect".[14] Ursula brings this wisdom of "blood intimacy" to her communion of body and spirit, and Lawrence suggests that the body is the seat of all emotion and the primordial seat of in his 1913 "Foreword to *Sons and Lovers.*"[15] Lawrence, unlike Gide and Nietzsche, grounds his analysis of the dispute between spirit and flesh in Christian rather than classical terms, assigning "Flesh" to the Father of the sensuous and active Old Testament, "Word" to the Son of the "intellectual" and passive New Testament. In turning around John's metaphor that in Christ "the Word was made Flesh", Lawrence suggests it is this Christian misunderstanding that forced the split between spirit and body, that set at odds virtue and nature. Since the Father precedes the Son, so must the Flesh precede the Word. In the Flesh, Lawrence suggests, lies a primordial wisdom; in the flesh lies the self at one with nature.

Nietzsche's new morality of strength echoes, too, in Ursula's preference of the lion to the lamb, of the Old Testament's proud sensuality to the "degrading" humility of the New Testament; in Gide's and Michel's belief that activity rather than passivity, health rather than delicateness, are the means to a fuller understanding of a self grounded

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[12]*The Birth of Tragedy,* trans. Francis Golffing (New York: Doubleday, 1956), 23.

[13]*Thus Spake Zarathustra,* 33, 39.

[14]*Letters I,* January 15 1913, 503.

[15]Cambridge *Sons and Lovers,* 467-473. The foreword was first published in *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence* in 1932.

in the Oneness with a robust nature.[16] But more interesting than wondering to what extent these philosophical similarities in him and the two novelists are derivative or coincidental is noting the similarity in the personal formations of all three authors. Perhaps when Gide wrote that he had found in Nietzsche all his secret thoughts,[17] he had discovered another maternally-dominated Puritan whose Christianity had cut himself off from his own nature. Nietzsche, as were Gide and Lawrence, was raised by a piously Puritan mother; his father's early death left him surrounded by a similar "feminine" environment that encouraged his innate sensibility and "delicacy", both psychological and physical.[18] As will Lawrence and Gide, Nietzsche comes to see his "delicateness" as the emblem of the cultural sickness effected by Puritanism's separation of the "self" into body and soul; and, as will the novelists, Nietzsche looks to "shed [his] sickness in books".[19] Born of the illness attendant to his delicate constitution is Nietzsche's passion for sun and health, for the Fatal Woman in the South's Carmen[20]; In offering a "Southern" saviour in Zarathustra, then, Nietzsche's metaphorical geography, as will Lawrence and Gide's, looks to the robust and unconscious South for the wholeness denied in the "delicate" and cerebral North.

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[16] *Si le grain*, 302; *L'Immoraliste*, 56, 61.

[17] Letter to Marcel Drouin (from Pérousse, 28 March 1898), reproduced by Claude Martin, *La Maturité d'André Gide: De Paludes à L'Immoraliste,1895-1902* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1977), 272.

[18] "It was a household of girls and women in which the young Lawrence was brought up, especially as he was 'always delicate' and at home a great deal more than most boys; home was the woman's realm" (Worthen, *D. H. L.: The Early Years*, 52). The "delicate" Gide, like Jérôme, was raised by two women and considered his two female cousins to be his best friends.

[19] *Letters*, II, 90. For all three authors, ironically, the delicate health they hoped to throw off galvanised both their artistic creativity and the constant creative renewal of their "selves". Gide surmised early that sickness constituted a "système des compensations" . . . une inquiétude nouvelle, qu'il s'agit de légitimer. La valeur de Rousseau, de même que celle de Nietzsche, vient de là". "Rien à attendre des 'satisfaits'" (*Journal*, "Méditation II, 1896", 98). Certainly Lawrence attempts through his art to compensate for his frailty, to shed sicknesses physical as well as psychological. And it seems precisely because their common frailty threatens to deny them the fullest measure of sensual pleasure that Gide, Lawrence, and Nietzsche recreate themselves and their heroes to be as robust physically as they are mentally.

[20] Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy* (New York: Garden City Publishing Co., 1926), 449.

Without reducing the similarity of their rebellions to a psychological analysis, it seems fair to say that all three authors came to view their northern "sickness" as "feminine" (spiritual, passive, delicate), their southern cure as "masculine" (sensual, active, robust). Arguably, the vehement rejection of the feminine icons they had created in their "feminine" youth implies an unconscious rejection of their own female sensitivity. The irony seems to have forged the character of their art: the same androgynous sensitivity that provided an intuitive understanding of their female characters' demands, once they look South, the destruction of the female. To my argument that the killing of Marceline, Alissa, and Miriam is a sort of matricide, I might add that it is, too, a sort of partial "suicide", the killing of the "feminine".[21]

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In charting the move from the intellectual Edens of traditional philosophical absolutes to the unsettling age of philosophical uncertainty, it seems proper to consider once more why Lawrence and Gide, and their young male lovers, would be tempted to freeze their Maidens in the golden age of Romance's and Christianity's idealism. Nietzsche warned that "whenever the Dionysiac forces become too obstreperous", the Apollonian "marvellous illusion" must be close at hand".[22] In an age of teleological relativism, patristic Christianity and Romance offer a return to the womb of easy absolutes. Once, inspired by his lady, the knight rode into the forest where he confirmed his identity by slaying the dragon, his society's Other. Now the knight discovers his "authentic-self" *in* the forest's dragon, and must return to slay the lady he had helped fashion into the emblem of his society. Once hailed as society's hero, the knight now exiles himself, to be forever torn between the prize of spiritual liberation and the loss of social harmony.

Disquieting, too, is the knight's realisation that, while he must turn his back on his civilisation's false *telos*, there is no certainty that another exists. Thomas Greene finds in Lawrence's attempt to transfer the vocabulary of Judeo-Christian absolutes to the "religious" experiences of

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[21]Another artistic irony, since it is their "androgynous" sensitivity that allows them to enter with such sympathy into the creation of their female characters.

[22]*Birth of Tragedy*, 145.

sexual union and art, "the bitter thought that man requires absolutes in order to live coherently, absolutes which, however, do not exist beyond his own need and conception of them."[23] Interestingly, immediately after Paul leaves Miriam, whom he could place so easily in "absolute" artistic traditions as "Gothic," for the frenetic "passion" with Clara, Lawrence describes him as an artist looking simultaneously back to the "definiteness" of the "Masters" and forward to the elusive play of "shadow and Light" of the tradition-breaking Impressionists:

> He loved to paint large figures, full of light, but not merely made up of lights and cast shadows, like the impressionists; rather definite figures that had a certain luminous quality, like some of Michael Angelo's people. (345)

To complete the break with specious absolutes of tradition signalled in his rupture with Miriam, Paul would have to forego the comforting definiteness of Michael Angelo's luminosity to wander in the uncertainty of the modern artist's light.[24] It seems unlikely that Lawrence ignored the obvious parallel between Paul's position as a "modern" painter and his own as a "modern" writer; it seems likely Lawrence implies a certain nostalgia for an age in which the Masters plied their art against a backdrop of comforting absolutes.

In their need to redefine both God and Religion--literally *retying* one's self to Godness--both Lawrence and Gide attempt an impossible marriage of physical and spiritual absolutes. They are left only with the desire for absolutes in a world where no absolute exists. The absolutes that sustained Western Civilization, like the icons it spawned to perpetuate them, demanded a world of moral antitheses: God and the devil, restraint and sin, heaven and hell, Madonna and Eve. In attempting to find a point of balance for their society, Lawrence and Gide set for themselves an impossible task, for the perception of balance invites a moral relativism too exigent for those of moderate virtue, those who would rather live out their days in the false assurance of a reductive moral world. Gide had gone to Africa in search of such a Golden Fleece.

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[23]Greene, 565.

[24]Interestingly, Lawrence, by 1914, had altered his view on that comforting definiteness. In his "Study of Thomas Hardy", Lawrence judged Michael Angelo's "great figures", rather than definite and luminous, were "static and looming" (73-4).

> Tout aussitôt il m'apparut que cette harmonie devait être mon but souverain, et de chercher à l'obtenir la sensible raison de ma vie. Quand, en octobre 93, je m'embarquai pour l'Algérie, ce n'est pas tant vers une terre nouvelle, mais bien vers *cela*, vers cette toisson d'or que me précipitait mon élan.[25]

But with all the language of absolutes, and the ironic theft of Romance's language to subvert Romance, Gide fares little better than the Jérôme who believed he had no other mission than to protect Alissa against a cruel world. Looking back in *Si le grain ne meurt*, Gide implies that he was never able to achieve that golden-fleece harmony of body and spirit: "Puis sans doute éprouvais-je déjà cette inhabilité foncière à mêler l'esprit et les sens, qui je crois m'est assez particulière, et qui devait bientôt devenir une des répugnances cardinales de ma vie".[26] He would succeed no better than his characters in pursuit of this "golden fleece", returning to the security of earlier absolutes after his second trip to Africa. With the death of his mother, Gide felt that his cousin provided the only orientation for his life. He believed at first that he would be able to guide her, insouciant of the perils, toward his larger moral horizon. But by the time he finds the courage to reveal these moments of rebellion,[27] he wonders if his real "secret" desire was to set her "virtue"--that which Jérôme finds in Alissa, Michel in Marceline--against his "nature"; "car, en Emmanuèle, n'était-ce pas la vertu même que j'aimais? C'était le ciel, que mon insatiable enfer épousait".[28]

Gide believed in 1895 that he could give himself entirely to his cousin; his twin *récits* suggest, perhaps, why that was not possible. Gide's works acknowledge that liberating oneself from absolutes, as Michel learns, is nothing; "l'ardu, c'est savoir être libre" (*L'Immoraliste*, 15). In Nietzschean terms, Michel, the Socratic "scholiast, blinding himself miserably over dusty books",[29] throws off the absolute standards of a restrictive Christian morality only to lose himself in an excess of

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[25]*Si le grain*, 285.
[26]Ibid., 173.
[27]*Si le grain* was published in 1920.
[28]*Si le grain*, 368.
[29]*The Birth of Tragedy*, 112.

Dionysian frenzy.[30] After slaying his Madonna and Maiden, Michel confesses his "sins" to the friends of his old world who, ironically, hope to secure him a post in which he might "serve the State" (10). Alissa returns from the forest with an intimation that destroys her; living too long in the security of Christian absolutes, and with no one to help her, Alissa is torn apart by the conflicting impulses of "Northern" renunciation and "Southern" abandon. Only the benighted Jérôme, forever oblivious of the "forest", escapes unscathed. Gide's final irony might be that while the world of easy absolutes promised by Romance smothers the authentic-self in its denial of life, those brave enough to redefine God and the authentic-self inevitably drown in the vortex uncertainty.

While Gide's *récits* imply his sympathy for the iconically restricted young woman, he does not allow his young female characters to throw off their male-fashioned "patterns", to exit successfully the forest of potential harmony. Lawrence *does* allow a woman to achieve that harmony; and while he invests much of himself in Ursula, he is honest enough to invest himself equally in the male characters, both the Will that would abstract her and the Skrebensky that would "civilise" her. Lawrence grants Ursula, then, a victory over his own dichotomising self, the same self that had created and then destroyed Miriam. And, more than Gide and Nietzsche, Lawrence continued to fight his natural delicateness and inculcated Puritan restraint, to devote his whole life to the pursuit of a body-soul harmony, of a freedom his culture had originally denied him. Despite the many disappointments in his search for an elusive balance, he continued in both his life and art to quest for "the perfect thing", never looking to set an earlier concept of "heaven" against the darker regions of "blood consciousness".

The purpose of this dissertation, however, is not to make invidious comparisons, but to acknowledge *both* Gide and Lawrence as the sort of "great writers" Girard speaks of, ones who "apprehend intuitively and concretely, through the medium of their art, if not formally, the system in which they were first imprisoned with their contemporaries".[31] Both

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[30]*Birth of Tragedy*, 145. "But only so much of the Dionysiac substratum of the universe may enter an individual consciousness as can be dealt with by that Apollonian transfiguration".

[31]*Girard*, 3.

authors dedicated their artistic lives to freeing themselves and their readers from cultural "Myths" often fashioned, ironically, by their own literary predecessors. If in their "mad saint-like tenacity in the pursuit of their ideals"[32] Gide and Lawrence recall the questing knights they deride in their work, they recall them, too, in their bravery; for both Gide and Lawrence, in using their fiction to work through personal and cultural sicknesses, are sufficiently brave to admit the fraudulence of their cultures' old "absolutes", brave enough to imply in the concreteness of their art how they too helped to quarry the cultural bedrock upon which the sensitive young women of their age would inevitably break themselves. In admitting through their intricate iconic subtexts their own complicity in exploiting these male-fashioned myths, Gide and Lawrence achieve a higher Grail, the "virtue" Nietzsche finds in *his* Southern "immoralist", Zarathustra.

> His doctrine, and his alone, posits truthfulness as the highest virtue; this means the opposite of the cowardice of the "idealist" who flees from reality. . . . To speak the truth and to *shoot well with arrows* that is Persian virtue.[33]

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[32]Greene sees Lawrence as a "pathetic" yet admirable Quixote, "the most eminent example of the modern hero" (573).

[33]*Ecce Homo, Basic Writings of Nietzsche.* ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1968), "Why I am a destiny", section 3.

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